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THE CONGREGATIONAL LECTURE,

SECOND SERIES.

THE CAUSES OF THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

LONDON
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THE CAUSES

OF THE

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ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

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PREFACE.

EIGHTEEN years have passed since the publication of the First Edition of these Lectures. In returning to the volume after such an interval, the Author has found it necessary to bestow considerable labour on its revision in the hope of rendering it somewhat less unworthy of its subject.

The drift of the Lectures may be said to be twofold.—First, to show that there are natural causes in the history of man and of society, which should dispose us to expect that even a revealed religion, in such a world, will not be found proof against corruption:—Secondly, to show what the causes are, which have actually tended to this result, in the history of the Christian religion.

As we have stated elsewhere,—we hold it to be no more surprising that a large portion of mankind should have corrupted the Gospel, than that a much larger portion should have rejected it; nor do we feel it to be a whit more perplexing, that men should have failed so lamentably in their use of the lights to be derived from the

revelations made to them in the Bible, than that they should have failed so much more lamentably in their use of the lights to be derived from the revelations said to be open to them in Nature. The mystery in all these cases, is not so much in what is *done*, as in *that condition of humanity* which leads so certainly to the doing of it. It is not properly a *Christian* difficulty, but a *natural* one. It does not date from the origin of the Gospel, but from the origin of Evil. In ecclesiastical history, except as thus viewed, there is much of a nature to disturb, rather than to confirm, the faith of the Christian.

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

Lancashire Independent College,
Moss Side, near Manchester.
Oct. 2, 1852.

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behalf, and in behalf of others, permit me to call your attention at once to the subject before us.

In examining the Causes of the Corruption of Christianity, it will be important that we endeavour to determine what may, or may not be regarded, as matter affecting the purity of the revealed system of things which the term Christianity is employed to designate.

The view of this system which first presents itself to an unprejudiced mind, is that of a Great Moral Remedy, adapted by Infinite Wisdom and Beneficence to the necessities of a sinful world. And whatever shall be found to alter or obscure the announcements of the gospel as to the moral state of the human race, or as to the nature of its own merciful provisions, we regard as constituting a corruption of the Christian doctrine. When these communications are mutilated, or so mixed up with what is repugnant to them, as to produce effects foreign from their proper tendency, they are manifestly deteriorated:—they no longer possess their true character, and they are no longer allied with those results with which, if left to their due course, they will ever be connected. The doctrine of the Trinity; the proper Deity of the Saviour; the reality and efficacy of his Sacrifice as the medium of pardon to the guilty; the personality of the Holy Spirit, together with all his ordinary Influences in the regeneration and salvation of the soul,—these we view as the distinctive and essential truths of revelation. As before us in the Scripture, they are truths to which nothing may be added, and from which nothing may be taken.

What we say of the system of Doctrine presented in the gospel, we say also of its Moral Code. In this respect, as in the former, it is sufficient and complete, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Nor do we hesitate to say that the Polity and Worship proper to this last and perfected economy of revealed truth,

are so far indicated, in their principles, in the New Testament, as to make it certain that what has obtained in these respects with the majority of professing Christians, in nearly every age, partakes much less of the simplicity of the true Christian usage, than of those corruptions in religion which owe their origin to the weakness or depravity of mankind. What the principles now adverted to really are, we shall have occasion to state as we proceed, together with the reasons which dispose us to regard them as sufficient for their purpose, and as of perpetual obligation. In plans of human contrivance, change is not unfrequently an improvement. But with regard to a state of things which Infinite Wisdom has devised, and to which a Supreme and Unalterable Authority is attached, every innovation must be an inroad of corruption, and must partake, according to its extent, of the nature of impiety.*

But while evil must be thus involved in all such innovations, both in the way of cause and effect, we shall do well to remember that even the corruptions of Christianity have been often made to serve other than corrupt ends, by the wisdom and benevolence which can bring good out of evil. The causes, moreover, producing these corruptions

* The Fathers often opposed the novelties of their times by reasoning in this manner. But, unhappily, the authority of received opinion or usage, or as it would have been designated at a later period,—the authority of the church, was suffered to become confounded with what was peculiar to Christ and his Apostles. "Hanc regulam ab initio Evangelii decucurrisse, etiam ante priores quosque hæreticos, nedum ante Praxeam hesternum, probabit tam ipsa posteritas omnium hæreticorum, quam ipsa novellitas Praxeæ hesterni. Quo peræque adversus universas hæreses jam hinc præjudicatum sit; —*id esse verum, quodcumque prius, id esse adulterum quodcumque posterius.*"—Tertul. Ad Prax. p. 501. Ed. Paris, 1675. The safety of this rule depends on its being maintained along with a cautious recognition of the authority of the inspired writers, as distinguished from mere church authority, whatever its antiquity might be. The impression of Christianity on mankind has resembled its effect on individuals, its earliest results, if we except the apostolic age, being by no means its purest and noblest. The Apostolic Fathers were but sorry followers of the Apostles.

suggest that much caution should be exercised in judging of the character and intentions of parties who may have been eminent for the good or evil of their conduct in relation to such changes.

We have already intimated that the great corruptions of Christianity have not been the effect of partial or trivial causes. Individual effort, and small events, may have become conspicuous among the means which have given prominence to such appearances. But it must be borne in mind, in connexion with all great changes, that the tendency towards them must have been great. If the enterprise of single persons, or the influence of trivial occurrences, be found to bring great events into prominence, it is because they have come upon a scale which needed only that small weight to make it preponderate. This was the case even with the fathers of the Protestant Reformation, and not less so with the founders of the Holy Inquisition. Both would have laboured in vain, had they not wrought on the predispositions of their times. It is a common error to suppose that great men give a character to their age. It is more true that every age imparts more or less of its own character to its leading men. Distinguished minds concentrate the spirit of their day; and though as reflected in them it may be a more pure, or a more intense spirit, still, as to its essence, it is that spirit;—that which has come upon the many, and is sublimated in the few. The mighty influence which has *seemed* to be exerted by such comparatively feeble personages as St. Benedict, and Peter the Hermit, is readily understood on this principle, and on no other;—in a word, the corruptions of Christianity have spread far, have taken deep root, and have assumed a most complicated character; and as is the effect, so is its cause, general, deeply laid,—as general, as deep-laid as humanity. All things in humanity, and all things in the conditions of humanity, have wrought to this end.

facts, and making no attempt to dispute them, he deems them matters having little claim on his sympathy or his thought! The history of the church, instead of being to him a development of the great purpose of heaven, and a ground on which many of his most affecting recollections are awakened, and whence some of his strongest aspirations are made to ascend to the gracious Being who is its head, is much what the mouldering grandeur of ancient Rome has become to the miserable peasants who herd their cattle in its ruins! It is not a small personal loss which happens to the man who is thus regardless "of the works of the Lord, and of the operations of his hand." It is not possible that he should possess an adequate sense of obligation either to God or man. And that pleasure, that elevation of soul, which is felt when we place ourselves as amidst the shades of believers, and confessors, and martyrs, in other ages, and in other lands, must be to him unknown. Of that better commonwealth, in which all faithful men have a place, and stretching through all time, it should not be too much for us to say:—"If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not thee above my chief joy."* The very dust of that desolation which has been allowed, at times, to come upon the church, should be more precious in our eyes than the splendour of any worldly empire.

That the corruptions of Christianity have been injurious to its interests, is but too manifest, whether we look to the past or the present. Men who distinguish between use and abuse in other things, often refuse to extend the benefit of that distinction to Christianity. They do not hold astronomy responsible for the frauds of the astrologer, nor chemistry for the dreams of the alchemist. They admit that a science may be sound in its principles,

* Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.

that whatever approaches nearest to perfection, must be, on that account, most liable to injury from its subjection to human agency. The artist who brings most ability to his pursuit, and whose works exhibit the most practised thought and mastery, generally needs that his judges should have gone over much of the same ground with himself. The common gaze would overlook nearly every thing to which his more cultivated mind attaches value. It can read but very partially what he has designed to convey; and will hardly fail to derive impressions from some points not a little foreign from his object. Hence the elevated regions of art are necessarily a thinly-peopled territory. The crowding and the buzz of the multitude are rarely known there. In a word, it is equally true, in science, in art, and in morals, that the elaborate, the profound, the exquisitely beautiful, are not to be truly appreciated except by a small minority possessing the requisite culture.

It is true, the gospel, considered as a revelation from heaven, must be regarded as commending itself to the *many*. But it is no less true, that it has its adaptation—its intended adaptation, to the *few*. It is designed to communicate its benefits to the rude multitude of our species, and has its form accordingly. But it is also meant to aid the most sagacious in passing from the earthly to the heavenly. It has its base far-spread over the vale beneath, but its summit reaches to the skies. It is framed to meet the low intelligence of men—even of the mass; but it is ever calling forth the wonder of angels, even of cherubim and seraphim. It is a school of instruction where the best informed have to become fools if they would be wise; and where the least faulty among us has to learn many a lesson of humility. The mere elements of knowledge and of goodness are iterated without weariness; but at the same time it conveys instruction on such matters transcending all that has been taught elsewhere,

—coming upon our path as light which diffuses itself into infinity.

If then it be true, that there are no doctrines so obvious in themselves, or that can be so clearly stated, as to be secure from gross misconception with the majority of mankind, is it reasonable to expect that the disclosures made to men in the gospel should furnish an exception to this rule? On the contrary, is not Christianity just the last system from which this may be expected, since it is emphatically *the* system which, in much of what it contains, is at the greatest remove from the weak perceptions of human nature, and most at issue with its prevailing inclinations? Must not every degree of its excellence be a multiplication of its hazards, as exposed to that rude treatment which must be attendant on its contact with man in his present fallen condition?*

If we look to any department of human learning, not excepting the most abstract sciences, we find them all liable, in their turn, to the changes which the word *corruption* is used to denote. A patient observer of human nature, especially as exhibited in national character, has described the effect of Mohammedanism on the sciences cultivated by its disciples during the middle ages, in terms directly illustrating the important point on which we are now bestowing a passing notice. "When success permitted the Mahometan monarchs to repose a little from

* "We say the gospel narratives must be real," observes Dr. Hey, "because no one could invent such incidents, manners, sentiments, and expressions, as we find in them. The Evangelists, at least, were not improved enough to it, in morality or philology. If this be a real argument, it is one which appear the more clearly, the more we improve in these particulars. If men improve, the gospels continue to seem to contain good morality, the dence of their excellence must be acknowledged to increase, because ev improvement in the judges of this matter, must put the writings judged b new trial."—Lectures, B. I. c. xiii. It is from ignorance and vice that C tianity has suffered its many wrongs. Its appeal is to intelligence and and where these are judges its cause is secure.

their warlike labours," says Mr. Chenevix, "they turned their thoughts to the arts and sciences, and the works of Grecian literature were translated. The first attempts were made under Al Mansor, who was prompted by a desire to introduce the Grecian practice of physic. His efforts were seconded by succeeding caliphs; and Galen, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, and others, became known in the empire of Islamism. A long list of names might be selected from among the celebrated Saracens of that epocha, as Al Kendi, Al Farabi, Al Ashari, Avicenna, &c., and most of all Averroes, who was compared to Aristotle himself. It is remarkable that all these men were physicians, no less than philosophers; in such high repute was the study of medicine in Mahometan countries. Yet this art was sadly turned aside from what it was in the writings of Galen and Hippocrates. The Mahometans, instead of pursuing the path of observation and experience, gave themselves up to disquisitions; but the moment they deserted their Grecian models, they fell into the grossest quackery, mixed up with astrology and uroscopy. Chemistry was indebted to them for the discovery of many pharmaceutic preparations, and for considerable improvements in the art of conducting operations. But these advantages came mixed with so many alchemical extravagancies and mysteries, that much of the obligation which modern science otherwise would have owed to them is lost. Astronomy is also indebted to them for many improvements; but the science was disfigured by astrology as much as it was improved by observation. The mathematics were cultivated by them, yet the doctrines of the Greeks were more frequently corrupted than improved. Many of their sages pretended that they could interpret the language of birds; while others imposed upon the vulgar with relations of supernatural visions, obtained by fasting and prayer; and distributed their charms and amulets among their dupes. In metaphysics, if so it can be called, they

reasoned with subtlety, according to the mode Peripatetics, but framed a system so mystical as incomprehensible."* Thus was science, even the pl departments of knowledge, corrupted under the ı Mohammedanism. But in Christianity, as in these we have the same natural effects, resulting from the natural causes.

But it will perhaps be said, that our reasonin from the history of other things to the history of tianity, might be admitted, if men were allowed to Christianity as of merely human origin, and as ex in common with matters for which nothing superı is claimed, to the ordinary influence of events and c stances. In this case, it may be said, it ought occasion surprise if the corruptions of Christianity be of marked variety and extent, seeing that it pres wider and more refined range of things to be affec the ignorance, the presumption, and the depravity o kind. But in behalf of Christianity, the characte divine revelation is claimed, and a divine influence i to be vouchsafed for its special preservation.

Now the distinction thus made we of course admit we strongly demur to the conclusion which seems very generally deduced from it. Divine influence ma much to human responsibility, but can never have intended to destroy, or even to impair it. This influ we believe, is conferred only so far as is needful t placing of man in that new state of probation wh introduced by the gospel. It will not fail of succe the extent of the promises relating to it. But conce those promises, we must insist that they are per reconcilable with the too partial effect of Christian the world, and with the evident feebleness of its agen the heart of many among its avowed, and even its ge disciples. Christianity leaves both nations and indivi

* An Essay upon National Character, I. 381—388.

subject to all those tendencies and usages by which they would otherwise have been influenced;—and while proposing to enlighten and renovate those who embrace its message, it is far from warranting astonishment at the fact, that the many reject it, and that among those who profess to embrace it, some remain altogether alien from its spirit, and even the best are only partially governed by it.*

It will hardly be said, that if a revelation be made to man, it ought to be secured from the least taint of corruption in every point. But if the existence of such corruption be conceded as reasonable *at all*, who shall determine the line beyond which it must become otherwise than reasonable? The whole question, therefore, is one of *degree* merely; and, as such, must have its place among the secret things which belong to God.

It will be perceived that the observations we have hitherto made, are not so much preliminary to the present Lecture, as to our whole subject. But we must now proceed to notice, more specifically, certain tendencies in the present condition of human nature, from which a various and extended corruption of Christianity was to have been expected. These tendencies stand related in part to infirmities in the exercise of the Human Understanding; in part to peculiarities of Natural Temperament; and in part to certain conditions of the Passions and lower

* Cyprian was not aware that any great degree of philosophy was necessary to understand such appearances. Inimicus videns ille idola derelicta, et per nimium credentium populum sedes suas ac templa deserta, excogitaverit novam fraudem, ut sub ipso Christiani nominis titulo fallat incautos? Hæreses inyenit et schismata, quibus subverteret fidem, veritatem corrumperet, scinderet unitatem. Quos detinere non potest in viæ veteris cæcitate, circumscribit et decipit novi itineris errore. Rapit de ipsa Ecclesia homines, et dum sibi appropinquasse jam lumini, atque evasisse seculi noctem videntur, alias nescientibus tenebras rursus infundit; ut cum Evangelio Christi, et cum observatione ejus, et lege non stantes, Christianos se vocent, et ambulantes in tenebris, habere se lumen existiment."—De Unitate Ecclesia. Opera. Ed. Oxon, p. 105.

become the opposite of themselves. Where such habits are found, error, on all subjects, is, more or less, inevitable. We cannot regard Christianity as entrusted to this slothful guardianship, without at once perceiving that the portion of it retained must be little, compared with the accumulated misconceptions with which it will be disfigured and overlaid. That the nominal Christianity of the large class to which we now refer, should have been so widely different from the Christianity of the New Testament, is really not so much surprising, as that such minds should have been found among the professors of such a system in any form.

It is not necessary that we should be able to say how small a portion of effort, or of knowledge, may be sufficient to salvation, in the case of persons who are placed in circumstances unfavourable to habits of inquiry. The fact is plainly before us—that the indolence of the human mind, the source of so much error on all other matters, is the prolific parent of error and corruption in relation to the gospel. We do not say that men must possess the studious habits of philosophers in order to be Christians. But it is demanded imperatively that men should *seek*, if they would find; and that they should *learn* of Jesus, if they would be saved by him. To this duty, however, the sloth of the human understanding is so directly opposed, as to lead, in some instances, to a total rejection of the gospel; but, more frequently, to the adoption of defective and false views concerning it. We presume that persons who would obtain the slightest acquaintance with the laws of nature, must do more than breathe the air, or glance upon the heavens. But unless an effort scarcely more considerable, might suffice to render the majority of our species wise unto salvation, there has been little prospect, if left to themselves, of their ever becoming thus wise—so inert have been their faculties with regard to everything beyond the narrowest routine of thought, and so special

evils may be expected to follow among a people professing Christianity, as among the heathen, according to the degree in which mental indolence is allowed to become the parent of false views concerning the Deity. The great mystery here, as in a thousand cases beside, is, that the mind of man should *be* in this condition, in this God-made world—not that, being in this condition, such results have followed. But Christianity does not *place* man in this state, it merely *finds* him in it.

2. We may notice, accordingly, in the next place, that with this proneness to mental indolence, an IMBECILE CREDULITY is naturally allied; and to this cause we have to attribute much of the corruption by which Christianity has been dishonoured.

There are thoughts and susceptibilities from which no mind is wholly free, the tendency of which is to make religion, of some kind, a necessary adjunct of our being. Hence, the choice of man, in this respect, is not so much between the true religion and no religion, as between the true religion and a false one. The objects of his faith may be few or many, good or evil, and his manner of doing homage to them may be almost infinitely varied; but a faith in the supernatural of some kind, though it be nothing better than the supernatural of witchcraft, would appear to be unavoidable. The wretched superstition which sometimes shakes the heart of the rude Laplander, or African, may not seem to deserve the name of a *faith;* but we so advert to it, because, rude as it is, it serves, in some measure, to call forth the religious capabilities, though in a false direction. It shows the tenacity with which human nature clings to the existence of the supernatural, by exhibiting it as

ng through harsh and bold minds, as through an unyielding soil, it has produced impiety; and flowing over minds of a more yielding temperament, as a stream meeting with a softer mould, it has proved the parent of superstition."—De Superstitione.

and where, in consequence, its exercise may be neither unreasonable nor injurious.* But men have learned to extend the implicit reliance due to much which a properly attested revelation may contain, to other matters resting on a much less trustworthy basis; and by this easy process, have allowed the inventions of men to obscure, and supersede, the communications of their Maker. In the New Testament, though the subjects treated touch on all the mysteries of existence, embracing the spiritual worlds beyond the present, there is nothing to encourage that unreasoning state of mind which surrenders the understanding to the fictions of the imagination. Every mind accustomed to reflection, must have observed the striking contrast between the wonderful discoveries made in the gospels, and those human inventions which were meant to resemble them, and which we find blended with Christianity in subsequent ages. There is a simple grandeur—a character of nature and probability, attending the former, which are almost invariably wanting in the latter. What the Scriptures reveal, for example, concerning the future condition of mankind, is placed in that partial light—left amid those generalities and shadows, which enlightened reason would anticipate in the disclosures made to beings in one state, with regard to another possessing so little in common with it. The many notices which occur with respect to miraculous agency, all partake of the same chastened and natural sobriety. Compare these portions of the New Testament with the descriptions of invisible things supplied by the taste of Mohammed, and with the narratives of the miracles produced by the clergy in the middle ages—and, though designed to be counterparts, what have they in common? It is the opposition of wisdom to folly, of the spiritual to the sensual, of an order

* Celsus accused the Christians of receiving their doctrine on the authority of their teachers. No man could meet this charge more wisely than Origen has done.—Opera, I. 328—330. Ed. Benedict.

of things which would elevate the earthly to the heavenly, to another which would bring down the heavenly to the level of the earthly. It is not a small thing to be content with simplicity. As a matter of taste only, it is generally the last of our attainments. In all cases, it seems to require great confidence, either of power or of truth. The confidence of the Evangelists could only be of the latter kind, and it taught them to clothe the sublimest facts ever recorded in the simplest expressions:—treating of the spiritual and the infinite in a style and manner eminently adapted to render the faith of the believer a service at once reasonable and holy.

But after all the sacred writers have done in these respects, that easy credence with regard to the supernatural, which, within certain limits, had ever been an observable in human nature, is far from being corrected. The fact that the statute books of all the nations of Christendom should have been crowded with the most sanguinary laws against the imaginary crime of witchcraft; and that even in lands where the full light of Protestantism had shone for more than two centuries, numbers of unhappy creatures might be seen tortured and destroyed together, as the consequence of their being charged with that imaginary crime,—is enough to indicate the diversity and the extravagance of those corruptions of Christianity which must everywhere have flown from this source.

It may be true that there is often much to tolerate, not to admire, in the feeling by which the credulous led into their most erroneous conclusions. They find less difficult to suppose, that things which have not best appearance of truth, should be true, than to conclu that a large number of apparently good men, who pro to regard them as true, should have been in serious in relation to them. Even the most marvellous rel have no doubt been frequently credited, because it much easier, and a much less painful thing, to give

are minds which may not be described as indolent, and which it must be admitted are only partially influenced by credulity or prejudice, but which have their besetting vices in another shape. Their activity is manifest; and it would not seem to be their manner to believe without evidence, and they are far from thinking that what has been generally received, must, on that account, be worthy of continued acceptation. On the contrary, it is matter of much lamentation with these persons that men should be found capable of grovelling thus on the verge of mere instinct, yielding themselves to every current opinion or impression, and as for themselves they are resolved that it shall not be so with them. But, unhappily, while professing to be open on all subjects to rational conviction—these less passive spirits often become the victims of a tendency, which, though widely different from that which has so deeply offended them, is equally dangerous, and one that we cannot perhaps better designate than by the word PRESUMPTION—meaning thereby, a disposition to renounce established opinions, and to indulge in novel speculations, without necessity, and without due consideration and reverence.

With regard to the causes which produce this mental bias we say little at present. Its doings are remarkable for their capriciousness and eccentricity. Men who spurn authority because of its abuses, sometimes forget that it has its uses—and in rejecting it altogether, do not always

avellatur, quam quæ ad dogmata pertinent. Nec tamen illas alias, ubi semel inoleverint, facile excutiat. Unde vix adduci possunt homines, ut aut domos aut urbes, aut vicos, aut homines deserant, quibus cum junxere consuetudinem.—Hoc igitur in causa fuit, cur è Judæis etiam multi vaticiniorum, ac miraculorum quæ Jesus fecit, evidentiæ resisterent, nec circumstantias percellerentur eorum quæ eum perpessum esse scriptum est. His autem affectibus obnoxiam esse humanam naturam, evidens fiet cogitanti, quam difficile ab iis quæ sibi à parentibus concivibusque tradita fuerunt, avellantur qui semel iis fuerunt occupati, quamlibet erubescenda et stulta sint."—Opera, I. 367, 368. *Vide* 327—329, 332—336, 349—351.

stop to enquire whether they can *afford* to do so. Opinions which seem not to be the offspring of hereditary credulity, or of hereditary prejudice, may chance to be as little sustained by reason, as are the follies which they are meant to displace. Contempt of vulgar error, is not a sufficient guide to truth. There may be a prejudice *against* what is generally received, not at all more reasonable than the common prepossessions in its favour. It will not, of course, be said, in so many words, that where much is wrong all must be wrong;—or that because the many believe in religious matters without adequate testimony, the few should not be expected to believe at all. It would be going too far to say directly, that inasmuch as hereditary and commonly received opinions are in many instances erroneous, they should in no instance be acknowledged. Nevertheless, we often see a willingness in men to be carried into extremes of this nature; the language of their passions, if not of their reason, being nearly to this effect. When the mind becomes subject to a strong revulsion on such points, the labour of love is to destroy; and small is the energy or the skill which is brought to the business of construction, compared with what is applied to the work of demolition. It is a disposition, certainly, very unlike the quiescent spirit which has allowed the errors of ages and generations to transmigrate with so little interruption. But it does not follow from this circumstance that it should be altogether commendable. It may be well to pluck out the tares, but it is not well that the wheat also should perish. It may be important to annihilate error, but it is no less important to be in possession of the truth which should occupy its place. Neglecting this precaution, we may only have created a void to see it suddenly filled with some other, and, it may be, a more injurious kind of delusion. When men have cast away their sloth, and their easy credence in hereditary notions, the dangers which beset them in pur-

suit of truth are rather changed than removed. For ther especially comes the need of modesty, caution, and ar intimate acquaintance with the limits of human reason and with the nature of the many very difficult question with which it will have to deal. The man who know nothing of self-distrust, when placed in these novel circum stances, is bold only from an insensibility to danger. Th history of the human mind shows abundantly that th wise have their follies in common with the unwise; an that men may boast much of being governed by reaso alone, while among the many causes which lead to th formation of their sentiments, reason holds but a ver humble place.

Thus the new often comes by means as little reputabl as were those which served to perpetuate the old It is observable that all parties agree in imputing thi spirit of presumptuous innovation, and dogmatism, t their opponents, and thus confess its prevalence. Nor i there a department in science, in the arts, or in literatur where it may not be shown to have wrought its peculi mischief.

What we have now said concerning a tendency towar the presumptuous, relates to it as affective matters havin no necessary connexion with religion. But if we find i all other things, that the objects to which credulity an prejudice do their homage, are ever liable to be assaile and that the assaults made upon them are often as litt reasonable in their spirit, and as injurious in their effects, was the passive temper which so long submitted to them;- where, we must ask, is the room for wonder, if Christianit also, be found to suffer much from this cause? It mu be evident, on a little reflection, that whatever damag may have resulted elsewhere from this spirit, may l expected to occur in this connexion in a still great measure. In the pages of holy writ, every man of th temperament is accosted in language little soothing

the spirit which rules in him. Here,—the things he is required to believe, the manner in which they are taught, the evidence on which they rest, and the consequences attendant on rejecting them, all furnish abundant reason for indulging in the sin so easily besetting him. Here he is called upon to deny himself the most, and here, as self-willed and presumptuous, he will be found an offender the most.

The history of the Church, especially of the eastern division of it, might be largely appealed to as showing the multitude and the monstrousness of the errors that may have their source in this spirit.* Neither have we need to pass from our own age, nor from our own neighbourhood, for striking and melancholy illustrations of this nature. Men are still found who can presume to discard the whole of that evidence which God has connected with his message of mercy to our race. And even where the authority of holy Scripture is admitted, how often is every thing that could make it of value to a nature conditional like ours extruded from it?† Nor is it unusual to find the

* I refer here to the subtleties connected with the Arian, the Tritheistic, and Sabellian controversies, and to those, no less numerous and incomprehensible, that were engrafted on the doctrine of the Incarnation. Not content with defending these doctrines as facts, the metaphysical forms in which it was attempted to explain them were the matter of fierce discussion, and the occasion of relentless persecution—all parties more or less forgetting that they were affecting to be wise above what is written, and extending their unbidden curiosity to matters which must ever be too high for created intelligence.

† "Faustus Socinus, and his immediate associates, were distinguished among other obliquities, for their attempts to infringe upon even the natural perfections of God. They denied that the essence of the Supreme Being is immense, or his presence infinite; regarding the Omnipresence of the Deity as only an energy or influence, exerted or retracted as occasion served." (F. Socini Opera, tom. I. p. 685.) "They regarded the eternity of God as an ever-growing time, so that the Deity is become older, and regards past and future spaces of duration as remote objects of perception, in the same way, though in a much nobler degree, that finite minds are obliged to do." (Ibid. tom. I. p. 545.) Crellius (whose sentiments on the Divine attributes are in many respects superior to those of his associates) de Deo et ejus Attrib. cap.

and their influence with regard to every thing intellectual, and especially with regard to every thing Christian, must be largely pernicious. Accordingly, there is enough in them, even when considered alone, to force upon every reasonable mind the unwelcome anticipation, that the history of Christianity, like the history of every thing else, will be, and in proportion to its goodness, to no small extent the history of its corruptions. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

is lost by this process; but by this means not a little
the beautiful variousness of nature is preserved in th
kingdom of grace; and a diversified fitness of agenc
adapted to the different kinds of necessity in the state
the church and the world, is perpetuated. It would al
be easy to demonstrate, that what is thus true of men wh
were alike Christians, and even of Apostles, who we
alike inspired teachers, is equally true of the ancie
prophets. The impassioned thought of David, the pr
found observation of Solomon, the transcendent imagin
tion of Isaiah, the tender sensibility of Jeremiah, th
homely fidelity of Amos, and the courtly elevation
Daniel,—all are features of individual character, whic
even the gift of inspiration did not so affect as to preclud
them from giving their impress to the writings which hav
descended to us from these gifted persons. Hence, th
sacred Scriptures, while conveying but one theme, presen
that theme in a form as varied as was the texture of natu
and habit in the persons who were called to place it upo
record: in other words, as varied as was needful, that i
might be mercifully adjusted, not only to the comm
wants of men, but to their peculiarities of character,
even to their diversities of taste. Error was precluded
from the mind of the sacred writers by the presence of th
Divine Spirit; and all the aids of memory or of illumin
tion for which miraculous influence was required, we
miraculously bestowed. Their authority, accordingly, i
perfect, the very terms used by them being, in so
instances, the dictate of inspiration. But, in general, the
all write as they were used to speak and act, each in h
proper character.

Nor should we, perhaps, be going too far were we
say, that the individuality observable in the sacred writ
was allowed to operate even beyond the peculia
which belong only to modes of communication. W
the Christian redemption as viewed by the several aut

of the apostolic epistles, was, in all its main features, the same, it is not easy to suppose, after a careful comparison of their writings, that the points in it which were most prominent in the eye of any one of them, were precisely those which occupied the same relative position in the view of the rest. There are certain truths or duties of religion which have what we may almost describe as an undue prominence assigned to them, the object of the sacred writer being to oppose some special form of error to which the circumstances of the time had given prevalence. And as it is with the feeling which may thus be peculiar to seasons, so it is with the feeling which is peculiar to character. The same system may have certain aspects especially interesting to minds of one complexion; and others which will obtain the same kind of precedence with minds somewhat differently constituted. The mind of the Apostle of the Gentiles differed in its natural temperament, and in its acquired tendencies, from that of his brethren; and to me this fact appears, not only in his manner of writing, but in his relative treatment of the topics introduced. And if it be true that the elements of natural character are suffered to operate, and to this extent, with respect to Christianity, even in inspired men, we should assuredly expect to find strong admixtures from this source in the systems adopted as Christian, by men who act under no such special influence.

1. Let us advert, then, in illustration of this part of the subject, to minds in which there is an EXCESS OF IMAGINATION.

Such may be the case, either from the unusual strength of this particular faculty, or from the weakness of others to which it should be subject. Wherever it is ascendant, it is in disproportion—in excess. We all know that it is capable of throwing a great charm, or the opposite, about the objects with which it becomes conversant—and having selected its objects from the present or the future, it can

to forsake the path of tribes and nations whose blood is still flowing in our veins; that all who so do must needs treat the Christian priesthood,—the men who have been the depositaries of all the seeds of improvement through nearly a thousand years in the world's history—as impious knaves, or, at best, as persons of small account; and to pour contempt on the many forms of poetic beauty and greatness which genius has lavished on the religion of the tent-maker and the fisherman, so as to have placed it for ages and generations, in fitting association with the college and the camp, with the throne of the prince and the hut of the peasant.

The effect of appeals of this sort, where there is a predominance of imagination, is often to take not only the feeling, but the judgment, captive. The stream is a stream of falsehood. To guard the unwary against these syren melodies, and to detect the spirit of imposture pervading such representations, is the province of reason. Nor can it be needful, before my present auditory, that I should make any attempt to prove, that such a manner of looking to the past as is denounced thus loudly, as being allied with everything pitiable as regards both intellect and feeling, is a manner of estimating that past which *may* have resulted from the highest reason—reason which, while ceding all due exercise both to imagination and feeling, maintains its own rightful supremacy over them, and instead of allowing itself to be beguiled by the appearances which seduce the weak, flitting before them like images before the dreaming or the drunken, is intent on what the eye of the understanding can see, as possessing a natural relation to the honour of Christ, and to the well-being of the souls of men.

Time, however, would fail us to expatiate on the modes in which an extravagant imagination can derange the proper relations of things, and substitute its own devices in the place of truth. It will be remembered that the

writings of critics and philosophers abound in cautions and instructions relating to the wise use of this endowment —so marked is the tendency to mistake wherever the action of this power exceeds its just limits. And with regard to religion, the connexion of this subject with so much that is of necessity but imperfectly known—with the unseen, the spiritual, and the infinite—and the force with which it appeals to all the sensibilities, and to the hopes and fears of our nature,—all these peculiarities combine to expose it, beyond any other subject, to injury from this source. Hence, there is scarcely any thing in the doctrine, the morals, or the institutions of the gospel, the history of which would not furnish large illustration of the disorders which have followed from excess in the tendency now under consideration. If we read of ages when the truths of our redemption were veiled from the apprehension of men by an imposing ritual; when the observance of such a ritual was allowed to usurp the place of moral excellence and religious character; when the simple and benign laws of the church of Christ were made to give place to codes more complex, subtle, and oppressive than ever disgraced the statute-book of a secular kingdom; if there came a time when Christian pastors learnt to affect the authority of sovereigns, and when the once simple-hearted and happy believer was succeeded by men who became inhabitants of the convent, the cave, or the desert, haunted there by a thousand miserable recollections, and by as many fancied influences from the worlds above and beneath him—in all those transformations, and in others without number, the most powerful agency will perhaps be found to have been an imagination without proper control, becoming at once the stimulant and the slave of the natures so misled by it.

Whence the great importance attached in some quarters to certain extravagant speculations said to be derived from the language of the prophets?—mainly because they have supplied a sort of enchanted ground where the imagination

an ill-regulated imagination, is to disturb the clear and full exercise of the understanding, and thus to bring error and suffering in its train. It must be admitted that imagination and sensibility are both in a great degree necessary to a lively perception of the great or the beautiful. And they are generally found together. It may suffice, however, to remark, that these are the properties which contribute most toward the formation of what is called the poetical temperament; and we may appeal to the lives of poets, as having been too generally marked by those mistakes of all kinds, which naturally follow from an undue susceptibility of impression. The mind tossed on the elements of feeling and fancy, has little prospect of reaching the haven of truth. Reason, thrust ever and anon from its place by these disturbing forces, can perform its office but imperfectly, and shipwreck often ensues.

When extreme sensibility is associated with a weakness of understanding, its subject naturally becomes a prey to all the petty occurrences of life. The death of a favourite animal may be, in such case, hardly less afflicting, for a time, than the loss of an inheritance. And even when allied with a superior intellect, it may become the source of influences greatly adverse to the discovery of truth, and to personal happiness. The agitations which accompanied the first French Revolution filled the lunatic asylums of Paris. But such effects are every day resulting from less formidable causes; and where insanity does not follow, there may be that partial obscuration of the reason, sufficient to account for false impressions, and false views, without number. In fact, there is some divergence from the sane even in the wisest, and the tendencies now alluded to are among the most potent in strengthening such divergence. And why should it be deemed incredible that these causes should operate with much of their wonted untowardness in reference to Christianity?

When we know that the poet Cowper meditated suicide

before he became thoughtful in relation to Chris
we cease to be surprised on finding that his views
revealed religion are sometimes of a gloomy comp
And passing over other facts, the history of the appeal
to our susceptibility of mere emotion, in the Romish
of polity and worship; and the success which has at
the fiction of a middle state, and the practice of
for the dead, are points showing sufficiently the eas
which our untaught feeling may be arrayed agair
claims of scriptural truth.

3. With these simply natural causes, affecti
purity of the Christian religion, we may connect a
having respect to the UNHEALTHY CONDITIONS OF OU
SICAL NATURE. Morbid conditions of our inferi
ture have ever been a manifest source of much
speculation on religious subjects. There are
which seem resolved to assert their independe
the body, exhibiting an elasticity and energy whic
sent a forcible contrast to the condition of the i
nature. But such instances are not frequent. In g
the nature of the physical system has a very perc
influence on the inner man, especially in whateve
nects itself with the feelings. The general effect
enfeebled and diseased body, is to lower the
spirits, and through that channel to people the pa
regrets, and the future with forebodings. It often i
a timidity unfavourable to a becoming search after
—begetting a readiness to acquiesce in the neares
of things, should that be of a nature to hush the inqu
within. It is not when drooping in his sick chamb
we should prefer consulting a friend as to the
bility of success in some dangerous and laborious
prise. We should rather choose an interval of ea
health, as being much more conducive to a just es
of difficulty and danger. Now the invalids in ever
munity will always form a numerous class, and the

in consequence, of their habits, on the aggregate spirit and conduct of society in regard to religion, must always be considerable. Their general tendency is toward that mental indolence, and those habits of credulity and timid acquiescence, which we have observed to be so prevalent and injurious.

The spirit and the truths of the Christian religion have indeed suffered little from this cause, in comparison with the evils which have resulted from the preceding. There is often a kindly influence vouchsafed to the suffering, through the grace of the Gospel, rendering the season of bodily infirmity the time of better thoughts and heavenly aspirations. But this is not always the case. Even with the most devout believer, impaired health has sometimes the effect of lessening his capabilities of religious enjoyment, and it may be even the main cause in producing a feeling of spiritual desertion—the terrors of despair. With that large class of persons whose profession of Christianity is purely the effect of education, the cause we have now touched upon has often so strong a tendency to produce religious apprehension, that priestcraft, as every one must be aware, has never palmed its devices on men so easily, as when approaching them in their times of sickness, or on the bed of death. Our Statute of Mortmain is only one amidst the innumerable attempts of civil rulers, to secure the property of the sick and the dying from the rapacity of men but too much disposed to take advantage of the infirmities of the human mind at such seasons. To the state of such all men come soon or late; and to the danger of strengthening by example the misconceptions of religion which are too common in that state, we are all liable. We may add also, that this danger is always increased in the degree in which the previous life has been marked by profligacy or irreligion—the mind of such sufferers being naturally exposed at such a crisis to every extreme of delusion,

"what they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed." About these matters, or things of the same earthly description, all the solicitudes of a large portion of the human race are occupied. Whatever promises the means of animal gratification, is so attractive with these persons, that their leading object in all their plans and exertions is to secure indulgences of this nature to the largest extent. Sensual pleasure, in some of its many shapes, is habitually honoured as the chief good.

The effect of such tendencies on mental and moral character is always manifest. In the many, they conduce to a state of ignorance and insensibility as regards everything spiritual, from whence the grossest brutality often proceeds. And when connected with higher station and culture, these sensuous desires too frequently produce effects which merit even a louder censure; as in the court of our Charles the Second, and in that of his splendid contemporary in a neighbouring nation. It is not denied that we sometimes meet with high natural sagacity, and considerable acquirement, where the sensual nature is thus dominant. But the result is only the more injurious. In such instances, the capabilities of the mind are constrained to act as a sort of bribed deponents on the side of these lower inclinations. With the more vulgar sensualist, the penalties of law are often made to supply the place of a proper sense of right and wrong. At the same time, we see that with the more elevated class of offenders of this description, justice, truth, clemency, all come ere long to be matters of mere expediency. The pleasures of appetite become their chief good, and, as much as in them lies, they make all things subservient to pleasure in that form. That a condition of human nature so generally adverse to mental culture, and to all the proprieties of moral conduct, should lead, in many cases, to a total rejection of Christianity, would appear to be only the natural course of things. And if there should be conventional reasons dis-

and narrower sympathies, are the common effect of habits of this nature—such as will generally leave the most pernicious evils in society wholly undisturbed, so long as they do not trespass on that little circle of decent selfishness in which these worshippers of quiet indulgence are content to pass their days, and to expect their elysium. With these persons, public profession, general conduct, everything in the common affairs of life, is regulated entirely with a view to what may be favourable to their local respectability, their domestic ease, their every-day comfort.

The connexion between the governing inclinations of the persons described, and a corruption of Christianity as adopted by them, must be at once evident. That such minds will resort to evasion, in order to escape from the claims of the Gospel when adduced, is clearly predicted in the parable which presents one as pleading that he has bought five yoke of oxen, and must needs go and prove them; another, that he has purchased a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it; and a third, that he has married a wife, and must on that account be excused. And where the claims of the Gospel are not thus openly set aside, the natural effect of these worldly preferences is to dispose the mind to such views of it as may render it as little inconvenient as possible to a spirit of worldliness. Nor need I remind you that there are systems which bear a Christian name that are so divested of every thing truly spiritual, as to be congenial with natures thus "of the earth earthy." The indolence, the credulity, and the prejudice, which we have seen to be so adverse to the purity of the Christian profession, all derive not a little of their strength from this source.

We may add, that the aims of the more intellectual and ambitious among worldly men, are not to be excepted, in any important respect, from this general censure. But before we make any observation on this fact, we must notice a source of error more nearly connected with the

condition of our nature now under consideration, a which may be expressed by the word FORMALITY.

5. The people of every age and country have shown readiness to account religion as consisting rather in certa outward usages, than in a just condition of the mind in the possession of right thoughts and right affectio This inclination may be said to have manifested itself two ways—first, by substituting a show of zeal in beh of religious institutions, in the place of all real conce about anything that could be properly regarded as religio and secondly, by raising the forms of religion above t sense of moral obligation, so as to allow a scrupulousn about religious ceremonies to compensate for a neglect moral duties.

No modern zealot has more loudly proclaimed his vo of attachment to the religion,—or, in the oratorical phra to the altars of his country, than was the custom both the populace and of their superiors in the nations antiquity. The men of Ephesus, who cried for the spa of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" did more than the men of any other city would have do in the same circumstances. To erect temples, to supp a priesthood, and to furnish the means of sacrifices a pageantry, were all regarded as acts of piety. But t aids necessary to perpetuate these sacred usages bei once supplied, there was presumed to be a sanctity in t priestly character, and a gratefulness to the objects worship in priestly services, which went far toward d charging the worshipper himself from all further obli tion. Hence, if any questioning arose about the es blished religion, nothing was more common than an app to the number and costliness of religious edifices, a religious processions, and to the honours attached to t consecrated persons on whom it devolved to see that proper homage to the gods was duly rendered. At t same time, nothing was further from being common, th

any appeal to the *character* of the people professing this religion, as affording any real evidence in its favour, by demonstrating its power to purify and ennoble its professors. Remote ancestors, indeed, were sometimes described as having been very pious in their day; but any reference of this kind made to contemporaries was felt to be worse than useless. In short, the religion of each individual was felt to be identified with the religion of his country, and the religion of his country was a carefully constructed mechanism, which, once put into motion, was presumed to achieve whatever was most important to be done,—a kind of national oblation, continually offering, and continually operating as an expiation for the sins of the people.

Nor is it doubtful that this leaving of the whole conduct of religion to its ministers,—just as we leave medicine or law to their respective practitioners, was quite as much the work of the people as of the priest. It was their will to have it so, otherwise it would not so have been. Priests may have availed themselves of the inclination, but they did not create it, and without it they would have laboured in vain. Men were not so fallen as to have lost all sense of religious duty. But, from various causes, it was deemed well that the duty to be performed should consist mainly in outward services, and that these services should be understood to be best rendered by a class of persons piously consecrated, and as piously maintained, for that purpose. Hence, each man's religion consisted, almost exclusively, in his being a friend to the religion of his country; and the religion of his country, excepting in the instance of the games and pageants to which the people were admitted, was a matter confided to the priests.

To be religious only after this manner, was to be religious by proxy—and, absurd as any such notion of religion may be, it is nevertheless true, that so long as it shall be a tendency hardly separable from human nature, to

this miserable imposture? Sensuality, worldliness, and malevolence, all are too often indulged without fear, because connected with noisy avowals of devotion to certain ecclesiastical names and practices;—"tithing the mint, the anise, and the cummin," but neglecting the weightier matters of the law, "judgment, mercy, and faith." The disposition to put the sign in the place of the thing signified;—to halt in the means, forgetful of the ends, is foreboding enough. But much more alarming is it when men regard their seeming zeal about the forms of religion, as conferring on them a liberty to violate its spirit;—when so much virtue is conceived to be in their clamour about their sectarian peculiarities, as to render it a small thing that they indulge in the fraud necessary to become devourers of widows' houses, or that they should resort to both fraud and force for the purpose of removing opposition to the progress of their favourite maxims or opinions.

Despicable as this sort of illusion may seem, when rightly viewed, there is nothing to which human nature is more disposed to submit. We must not presume that there is any religious party in which this evil may not be found. In general, it is so obvious that the slightest observation will suffice to detect it. In some quarters it may operate less directly and visibly, but still to an injurious, and even to a fatal extent. A man may adopt a scriptural creed, and worship God after a scriptural form, and the very conviction that his creed is what it is, and that his mode of worship is what it is, may lead him to assume, much too hastily, that his personal religion must be what it ought to be; or at least may beget a confidence of his being right and safe, not at all conducive to that humility, vigilance, and prayerfulness, without which the consistency of our religious character will certainly fail. Our own spirit is not of necessity what it should be, because we have learnt to boast of being the descendants of men who were distinguished by the purity of their

Nor is it enough that we should observe the vanity of mankind, in its more ordinary modes of operation. We must do more if we would become alive to its injurious effects when brought in contact with an order of things so little in agreement with it as is presented in the gospel. In minds of a feeble and passive character, this passion may dispose to little more than a scrupulous conformity with whatever may chance to be most in reputation. It then becomes a forcible ally of prejudice. But often, the moderate, the noiseless, the unobtrusive, are far from being the appearances most congenial to minds strongly influenced by this disposition. Where this passion is strong, its tendency is towards extremes. It is not unfrequently betrayed in a preference of whatever is paradoxical and eccentric, leading men to estimate opinions and practices, more according to their fitness to procure distinction, than from any other consideration. "If I were not Alexander," said the great conqueror, "I would be Diogenes;"—*something* I would be, which should give me separation from the crowd, a position of my own, a name. The extravagant notions, and pernicious maxims, which have owed their existence mainly to an aspiring or a mortified vanity, can be neither described nor enumerated. With not a few in this class of minds, notoriety, and a kind of stage-effect, is as the charm and glory of existence. To such results, all moral considerations come to be more or less subordinate—consciously or unconsciously. Thus the vanity of being thought fearless and untrammelled, may give a transient popularity to atheism itself;—and where the worst evils are inflicted on society, the effect may be viewed with complacency, if regarded as bespeaking the importance of the party producing them.

And when the vain man does not thus openly forsake the path of truth, there is much in its nature to give him umbrage, and to put him upon expedients for escaping from subjection to it. If admitted at all, it must be in

has so often discarded all the lessons of wisdom and experience; which would often consign whatever has existed without its aid (and for that sole reason) to oblivion, or so change its character as to claim the merit of creating it—the temper which, in conforming with what is established, betrays everywhere a fondness for theatrical display, a thirst for pre-eminence, the envy that sickens at success—in a word, which would have all external existence tributary to itself—this is the temper, which, in reference to Christianity, has done not a little toward producing those marvellous changes which meet us at every step in our comparison of the earlier and later history of the Church. That deluded and perilous state of mind which we intend by the expression spiritual pride, is the direct offspring of this disposition. It is the vanity of being deemed more holy than other religionists, filling the place that would else have been occupied by the vanity of wealth or power, rank or beauty.

7. We must not conclude this rapid view of the tendencies in human nature, affecting the state of Christianity in the world, without adverting to the influence of a passion clearly distinguishable from vanity, though often confounded with it—the passion we designate by the term PRIDE. The effect of this passion on all matters relating to human conduct, or coming within the range of human inquiry, is everywhere manifest. So far as it partakes of an undue self-estimation, it bears a resemblance to vanity; —but it is more self-sustained, having less to do with the sentiment of others, than with the persuasion of the individual. The proud man must be important in his own estimation; the vain man must be important in the estimation of others. Hence a multitude of circumstances which operate as with the force of law upon the vain, may be sternly and effectually resisted by the proud. But to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, must be to think erroneously as to all the relations in

which we are placed, whether towards man or our Make
It is an error which has its place at the root of our mor
arithmetic, and must necessarily extend itself through a
the steps of our moral reckoning.

In general pursuits, pride will often supply a stimulu
to exertion. But there is much in its influence fro
which evil must result rather than good. It ever produce
a dislike of obligation, which, in reference to the dis
covery of truth, must be exceedingly detrimental. To b
proudly negligent of the labour of others, is to be busie
with the alphabet of things, when we might be acquirin
a mastery of their language. The man, moreover, wh
has formed an extravagant estimate of his own capabilit
will probably underrate the effort necessary to success
and instead of profiting by the reproofs which his failure
may call forth, will generally become indignant, warped i
the future exercises of his judgment, and wedded to hi
mistakes, however preposterous. The history of ever
people is pregnant with the ill effects of systems and ente
prises which have owed their origin chiefly to this passion
—either in its palmy state, when swollen by conception
of superior power; or in its state of resentment, whe
wounded by opposition or disasters. In all matters
opinion it has been the parent of innumerable errors, an
in social life it has produced all possible disorder an
suffering. Whatever presumption has done, it has don
as the first-born of pride; and whatever tyranny has don
it has done as the favoured offspring of the same paren

Viewed in its relation to Christianity, it must be evide
that the tendency of pride will be to give plausibleness t
everything that may favour those high conceptions as t
the present condition of human nature which persons
this disposition are ever ready to entertain. When a m
of this class is also a man of some benevolence, the flatt
ing judgment which he has formed of himself may be
effect, in part, of a similar misconception with regard to

llectual, or the moral power of mankind generally
ıd his persuasion will perhaps be, that his plea in
ur of our species is not urged so much in his own behalf,
:om motives of a more generous description.

ut, however modified, by this, or by other causes, the
:t of mind now adverted to is in direct opposition to
spirit of the first preachers of the gospel; to the most
icit injunctions of Holy Writ, and to the natural ten-
:y of the doctrine which it promulgates. There are
ons involved in this doctrine, with regard to the present
ə of the human understanding, and of the human heart,
:h must render a lowly docility under the teachings of
iration, and the deepest self-abasement on account of
guilt and corruption, a reasonable service. There is a
ked peculiarity in this respect in the Christian doctrine,
:h imparts itself to the Christian character; but a
ıliarity with which the proud will be especially offended.

impression of such minds is, that men only need
e the effort, in order to become both as wise and as
l as duty may require. But it is the doctrine of Scrip-
that men are alienated to an awful extent from truth
goodness; that only as God—"who commanded the
t to shine out of darkness, must shine into their hearts,
ive them the light of the knowledge of his glory, as it
es in the face of Jesus Christ," can they become truly
; and that only as they shall be born again—regene-
in the spirit of their mind by the Spirit of God, can
ever become spiritually obedient, so as to serve God
ptably. In the multitude of scriptures that speak to
effect, we have confessions made, or implied, with
ect to our fallen and dependent condition, which must
s wormwood to the haughty prepossessions of the
lren of this world.

:ould we not, then, expect that minds of this com-
on will sometimes discard revealed truth altogether,
often betray in relation to it all the bitterness of a

LECTURE III.

THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM MISAPPREHENSIONS OF JUDAISM.

"They are not all Israel which are of Israel."—Rom. ix. 6.

In the preceding Lectures, my endeavour has been to place human nature before you as partaking of certain tendencies, all of which must have operated more or less unfavourably as regards the purity of the Christian religion. In so doing, I have avoided all inquiry as to the influence of those conventional systems and usages, whether secular or religious, which, while originating very largely in the tendencies described, have reacted upon them with great potency. That these dispositions towards a divergence from the right way are powerfully affected, both in the individual, and in society, by external circumstances, is unquestionable; and in the following Lectures, my object will be to trace their development in connexion with such customs and such systems of opinion as were most influential among those portions of the human race whose profession of Christianity has contributed in any marked degree to a corruption of it.

We have seen that there is both an intellectual and a moral bias, common to mankind, which must always endanger the integrity of the true and the good, and this in proportion to the elevation of the truth and the goodness with which it comes into contact;—a bias, in consequence, which must

expose Christianity—transcending every other syster
does in these respects, to peculiar peril. It will now
that there have been systems, and social peculiarities,
while owing nearly every thing in their character to
general tendencies in man, have always come as a pe
ble and often as a powerful reaction upon human n
Man has created them, or moulded them according
own impressions of fitness, and, as the result, has b
more confirmed in the tendencies which have given
existence. The inventions of human nature as it is
all thus contributed to perpetuate human nature a
It is not, therefore, with man, considered in hims
merely in his social relations, that we have now t
but with man as subject to the superadded agency of
more systematic forms of opinion or usage which n
peculiar to certain communities, or to certain time
places. The effect produced on character by the or
intercourse of social life is always observable; but
in a great degree distinct from what is produced u
people by their philosophical predilections, and esp
by the nature of their religious profession. It is ir
ant that we judge rightly concerning men viewed s
as men; but what men are likely to become as subj
the influence of Judaism or Paganism, or as given
particular range of Philosophical Speculation, is ar
question, and one no less deserving consideration
the object we have in view, it is not only requisite th
should know what man is, considered, as far as ma
abstractedly; but that we also know *when* and *whe*
allotment has befallen him,—in other words, th
should obtain full information as to the checks, an
aids, that will go along with his natural tendencies i
particular path assigned him. It follows, therefore
the general aspects of human nature, exhibited i
preceding Lectures, will be continually recurring,
they will recur as connected with those circumst

as the founder of Gnosticism*—a system which, as we shall see, was always most exuberant when in nearest alliance with the extravagance of an oriental imagination.

There must have been strong predisposing causes of this nature at work among a people who, from the smallest to the greatest, as the sacred historian affirms, could be brought to give heed to such an impostor as Simon, proclaiming him as "the great power of God." A people thus readily influenced by causes so much opposed to the purity of Judaism, will not be regarded as likely to have their place among those who adopted Christianity in its purest form. Through all the revolutions during the first six centuries of the Christian era, the Samaritans are known as a distinct, and even as a considerable people.† But while tenacious with regard to certain customs, they appear to have been easily seduced by any thing new on the subject of religion. Whether approached by Simon Magus, or by the Saviour of the world; by Menander, a disciple of Simon, or by Philip the Evangelist, multitudes were found ready to admit the novel claims which were thus from time to time urged upon them.‡

But this mixture of paganism, and of a false philosophy, with the religion of Moses, as professed by the Samaritans, became connected with that religion in perhaps an equal degree, as it was professed by the undoubted descendants of Abraham, who were dispersed among the Gentiles; especially in the case of such as were resident in Egypt. When Alexander built the city on which he conferred his name, among the emigrant tribes whom he encouraged to settle in it, was a large number of Jews. These he secured in all the privileges belonging to any other class of citizens; and partly in consequence of the religious motives which

* Justin Martyr, Apol. II. 69—91. Irenæus, Contra Hæreses, Lib. I. c. 23.

† Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, VIII. 323.

‡ Brucker, Historia Critica Philosophiæ, II. 661—684. Mosheim, De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum, Seculum primum, c. ii. sect. 19, 65—68. Ed. 4to. Helmstad.

ceptions with regard to the nature and offices of the Divine Word, though beset with obscurities and seeming contradictions, arising in part from the philosophic dialect in which they are presented, contain some forcible exhibitions of the leading truths of revelation. The measure of coincidence, also, between his doctrines, and some points of his phraseology, on this subject, and those so prominent in the writings of the Evangelist John, and of the Apostle Paul, is such as to show that the theology of the Alexandrian Jews must have been derived, in a greater measure than may at first appear, from the Old Testament.*

But when the most candid allowances are made, the corrupt state of Judaism among its professors in Alexandria must be sufficiently plain. And as might have been expected, its influence on the state of religion in Judea was considerable. That intercourse with the people of other nations, to which the Jews were exposed in their own country during the whole interval from the conquests of Alexander to the time of the Saviour's appearance, could not fail to make them familiar with the opinions and customs of their polished and powerful neighbours. Some there were who gave noble proof that they were not to be made parties to any corruption of the faith or worship of their ancestors, and some who proceeded to the excess of pronouncing an anathema on such of their brethren as permitted the education of their children in Grecian literature. But there were also those, who, to obtain the favour of their political rulers, or from

raise themselves to heaven they fall by pride." (De Migrat. Abraham, 414.) He strongly reprobates the doctrine, that man is competent to the cleansing of his own spirit without the aid of power from on high. De Somniis, III. See also De Victim. Offerent. 858. But there is a pride of peculiar illumination, having respect to the real or supposed mysteries of Scripture, which frequently comes into the place of that intellectual pride which disdains to acknowledge any thing beyond its letter; and the former attached in too great a measure to Philo and his school.

* Mosheim, De Rebus Christianorum, c. i. sect. 30. Seculum Tertium, sect. 28. Neander, I. 41—49.

called the *practical* and the *theoretical;* the latter carrying their ascetic notions to a much greater extent than the former. The deteriorated kind of Judaism professed by both these parties may be inferred from the fact, that there have not been wanting learned men who have failed to see any thing in the opinions or customs of either to indicate a Hebrew origin. And it must be confessed, that while their Jewish extraction is affirmed most decidedly both by Philo and Josephus, their religious sentiments, and their manner of life, were manifestly derived from the oriental philosophy, in a much greater degree than from the school of Moses. Thus their maxims led them to adopt a strict community of goods; to attach an extraordinary virtue to celibacy; to abound in minute observances as to food, apparel, oblations, and religious exercises generally—in some instances separating themselves from all secular occupations, and restricting their intercourse even with each other, so as to render their seclusion hardly a remove from that of the hermit. They appear to have honoured the sun as the visible emblem of the Deity, regulating much of their conduct by the times of his rising and setting. In attempting to reconcile this practice, and others, with the injunctions of Moses, they would greatly need the help of that mystical and allegorical method of interpreting Scripture to which they were so much attached. By these aids, however, some of their number even aspired to the gift of prophecy. What was meant by rendering every novitiate a sworn guardian "of the names of the angels," we can only know by remembering the magical signification connected with such expressions, as they occur in the history of that philosophy by which these devotees had been so greatly spoiled.*

* Brucker, Hist. Philos. II. 765—779. Mosheim, De Rebus Christianorum, c. ii. sect. 13—15. See some valuable remarks in Neander (I. 39, 40) on the comparative testimonies of Philo and Josephus to the character of the Essenes.

Amidst these sectarian differences, which, at the time of our Lord's appearance, had so far separated the Jewish people from each other; and which, with so little exception, bespoke their estrangement from the enlightened devotion which had distinguished so many of their remote ancestors, it is not easy to determine what their prevailing expectations were with respect to the character and the mission of the promised Messiah. It is but too manifest, that the splendour of that military ascendancy to which they had been subject from the age of Alexander, had produced an undue estimate of military glory; disposing them to expect in the Son of David, a deliverer of their country from its tributary state, and a leader, who should not only bring back their independence as a people, but raise them to the kind of greatness which had so long fascinated them as being the proud distinction of their oppressors. As these fond anticipations obtained, and it is evident they did obtain with the mass of the Jews both in Judea and through the world, there would be induced a tendency to look toward the coming Saviour as being simply a man—possessed, indeed, of transcendent powers, but distinguished mainly as a worldly conqueror, and as a sovereign in whom the Jew would see his highest conception of beneficence and sovereignty realized.

A few remained, even to the last, who "waited for the consolation of Israel," as spoken of by the prophets. And though the views entertained by this small remnant partook necessarily of much obscurity, and of some inconsistency, and were, perhaps, considerably different from each other, there was a spirituality, and a real greatness of sentiment, characterizing their impressions on this vital question, which has always given them a position, in the retrospect of devout men, as "lights shining in a dark place."*

* Mosheim, De Rebus Christianorum, c. ii. sect. 8. Dr. Smith's Scripture Testimony, I. 623. Sumner on the Evidence of Christianity derived from its Nature and Reception, c. ii.

Many thoughts are suggested in relation to our subject by this brief review of the state of Judaism at the time when Christianity was first published. It is worthy of special observation, that we have not mentioned a single corruption of Judaism, which has not its strict parallel in the history of Christianity. What human nature has done under the present dispensation, is precisely what it did under the preceding. It is not only the same depravity which is seen under the two economies, but the same depravity availing itself of the same means, and manifesting itself in the same forms.

The history of the Christian church has made us conversant with men, who, while admitting the authority of the New Testament as a divine revelation, have laboured to exclude from its pages the very doctrines which it was specially designed to make known, and on which it depends for all its adaptation to mankind in their present moral condition. Thus did the Sadducees profess submission to the authority of Moses and the prophets, and, at the same time, so explained their language as to deprive their message of every thing characteristic of it,—of every thing imparting to it fitness and worth as a revelation to humanity. In both instances, the result is the same, and proceeds apparently from the same causes. Among these causes we may mention a presumptuous tendency of mind, fostered so as to beget a love of the daring and eccentric; together with a supercilious estimate of whatever may happen to be in favour with the multitude. Added to these tendencies was a spirit of worldliness, which never fails to dispose men to bring down the standard of scriptural requirement to the level of those very moderate compliances with which human nature is generally satisfied in matters of religion. Nothing could be more acceptable to minds inclined to free speculation, to men beset with selfish passions and strongly bent on present indulgence, than the system of the Sadducees. The extent in which

LECTURE IV.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM MISAPPREHENSIONS OF JUDAISM.

"They are not all Israel which are of Israel."—Rom. ix. 6.

It has appeared, in the preceding Lecture, that the state of Judaism at the commencement of the Christian era, was adapted, rather to perpetuate the sensuous and worldly tendencies of human nature, than to subdue them—that it was the creature, rather than the regenerator, of the people professing themselves its adherents. It follows, that such persons, on becoming Christians, would have nearly every thing to learn, and much to unlearn. Judaism, in its purity, would have been, as it was meant to be, admirably preparative to a reception of the Gospel. But in its corrupt state, the points which it retained in common with Christianity were few, and almost ineffective, compared with those in which the type had been so misinterpreted as to be found to be at issue with its antitype. Instead of being altogether preliminary to the perfect economy by which it was to be superseded, it had been so construed as to be placed in strong repugnance to it.

This leading fact should be constantly borne in mind when looking to the Christianity of Jewish converts. We expect that all men who truly embrace the Gospel will be found holding the substance of its doctrine, and manifest-

ing, in some degree, the newness of life which it is d signed to awaken and mature. But we also expect th error and imperfection will attach, more or less, to th most sincere; and that the nature of these remainin misconceptions and deficiencies will be determined by th nature of those opinions and circumstances by which th persons commencing a profession of Christianity ma have been previously influenced. Accordingly, the hazar to which the purity of the Gospel will be exposed amon converted Jews, must be from admixtures of Judaism, an of Judaism corrupted as we find it in the apostolic age.

There is a circumstance, moreover, in the early histor of the apostles, which, though little considered, is i itself sufficient to account for many of those mistake concerning the real spirit and design of the Gospel di pensation which were so soon observable among th primitive believers. For reasons which were, no doub highly proper, the apostles appear to have confined thei labours within the limits of Judea, until at least som twelve years subsequent to our Lord's ascension. And i was not until some two years later, that Paul commenc his travels as a preacher of the Gospel to the Gentile During these years, however, the Gospel had spread itse through many distant provinces of the Roman empir and being destitute, in such places, of any immedia apostolic superintendence, it was but feebly protecte against the injuries which threatened it, not only fro Jewish prejudice, but from that tendency in the age whi was every where disposing men to employ themselves i forming new systems, made up of selections from syste not a little at variance with each other.

The persons instrumental in this diffusion of Chris anity, consisted mainly of parties who had come in contact with it by their visits at Jerusalem; and o others as were driven from that city by the hand of pe secution, particularly on the death of Stephen. And

must be observed, that it was not until the Christianity so propagated had been acted upon by the many perilous influences we have described, for nearly twenty years, that the first of the apostolic epistles was written. An extended space, therefore, presents itself, subsequent to the day of Pentecost, in which the professors of the Gospel were almost exclusively Jews, and Jews who were in great danger of error from the want of that immediate apostolic authority which was so long restricted to Jerusalem, and to the parts nearly adjacent. Many, probably the larger portion, of the errors so frequently noticed in the apostolic epistles, owe their origin to this interval, and to those peculiar circumstances in which the foreign Jews professing Christianity were at that time placed. Nor should it be overlooked, in relation to this point, that long after the Gospel was preached openly to the Gentiles, it continued to be the practice of the apostles, in every city, to make their first appeal to the resident Jews, preaching in their synagogues.*

Another circumstance which conduced to render the appearance of dissension among the early converts of the Gospel almost unavoidable, was the seeming abruptness of the mode in which they had been recognized as Christians. Nothing was demanded of either Jew or Gentile

* Dr. Burton's Inquiry into the Heresies of the Apostolic Age, pp. 13–25. Lardner's Jewish Testimonies, c. i. Mosheim, De Rebus Christianorum, Seculum Primum, sect. 13. It was believed, in the second century, that the apostles remained at Jerusalem twelve years, in obedience to a command of their Lord (Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. V. c. xviii. Clemens Alexandr. Stromat. Lib. VI. c. v. p. 762); and Mosheim has perceived an important end to be answered by the arrangement. "The great interest of Christianity required that those whom our blessed Saviour had appointed the judges, or, as we ought, perhaps, rather to say, the arbiters of divine matters, and to whom he had given the power of regulating and determining every thing relative to the establishing of his religion, should for a certain time remain together in one place, that so an easy access might be had by those who were likely to stand in need of their advice or assistance; and their decrees possess an additional authority from its being known that they comprised the sentiments, not of one or two, but of the whole."—De Rebus Christ., *ubi supra.*

preparatory to baptism, and the Christian fellowsl
beyond an open profession of faith in Christ as the p
mised Saviour of men, and an avowed willingness to
governed in all things by his holy commandments. I
it must be obvious, that where these simple requisiti
were most ingenuously complied with, the religious kn
ledge possessed would often be of the most element
description, while much error would remain to be
carded, and many a false impression to be effaced.

It is true, the circumstances under which these pro
sions were made, were such as closely to test the sincer
of the persons making them. But mere sincerity is co
patible with a very imperfect state both of knowledge a
of feeling; and in the early churches, composed of p
sons differing so widely in habits and prejudices, a
where the oldest must still have been comparatively
novice, in respect to knowledge concerning the real nat
and significance of the new religion, the degrees of mut
concession would not be always adjusted so amicably
the more intelligent might desire. There was not only t
broad line made up of the differences between the J
and the Gentile, but many lesser points on which t
Hebrew converts would be at issue among themselves,
demanding the presence of a competent and a wisely ex
cised authority. When the primitive churches had be
for some time established, and the presence of inspir
teachers began to be withdrawn, the practice of admitti
men to the Christian fellowship on a bare profession
faith became less frequent. In the formation, however,
those churches, the apostles evidently deemed it prop
that all persons making a credible avowal of their belief
the Lord Jesus Christ, should be received as believe
Time was left to distinguish between the sincere and t
pretending, the deceiver or the deceived; and all t
difficulties likely to arise from such a course were view
as amply provided for in the acknowledged laws of Chr

tian discipline, which would always require the expulsion of the unworthy.

I. The excessive and ill-directed attachment of the Jews to the law of Moses was opposed in many ways to a preservation of the TRUTHS of Christianity in their purity. It must be obvious, that the causes which produced this state of mind with regard to the Mosaic ritual, were precisely those which tended to veil the true design of the Jewish lawgiver in that ritual, from the men professing to be his disciples. Hence there was much room to fear, that an obstinate adherence to the more imposing ceremonies of the law, would not only prove a source of corruption to the simple and partially defined *institutions* of the gospel; but that the misconceptions which had so long prevailed as to the general design of the legal economy, would be found to operate injuriously as regarded the purity of the Christian *doctrine*. The whole of that dispensation was clearly temporary and preliminary, its commemorative usages, in common with the rest, being "shadows of good things to come, the substance of which is Christ." Hence, no man could affirm the perpetual obligation of the ceremonial law, without betraying serious ignorance as to the distinct and real character of the two dispensations. There was, in this way, a strictly natural connexion between the disputes which related to the perpetuity of the law, and those which had respect to the means of justification—to the entire doctrine of salvation.

At Rome, in Galatia, and in other places, Jewish teachers were found, who not only contended for the strict observance of the ancient ritual while professing themselves Christians, but who insisted on such observances, as constituting, in an important degree, the ground of a sinner's acceptance at the tribunal of his Maker. This righteousness of the law, together with that amount of moral and religious excellence which every man was presumed to be capable of realizing, was accounted as sufficient to confer

lescended on him at his baptism, and remained with him ntil a little before his crucifixion. According to Cerinhus, Jesus of Nazareth was a partaker of true and proper humanity; and, as the dwelling-place of the Christ, was raised somewhat above humanity. His sole office, however, even when thus endowed, was that of a divinely qualified teacher. The manners of this pretended Christian are said to have been as open to exception as his creed. But depraved as human nature is, the marked success of a man who gives himself to the founding of a new sect, furnishes strong presumption in favour of his general conduct. Through several centuries we meet with notices of parties described as the disciples of Cerinthus. Even the lowest of the people do not long submit themselves to the guidance of disreputable leaders; and the professed disciples of Cerinthus were by no means confined to persons of that class.*

It is probable that Cerinthus had become known as the preacher of the doctrines ascribed to him in history, some time before the decease of the last of the apostles. The Ebionites, a sect consisting of parties who were not so much Christians as apostate Jews, embraced most of the dogmas of Cerinthus, and made their appearance about the middle of the second century. Their name is from a Hebrew word, denoting a beggar, or a state of the meanest poverty; and it is generally supposed to have been that of their founder, or of some distinguished teacher among them. There are some writers, however, who regard it as having been adopted to describe the state of voluntary poverty which obtained among the first Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, and which these religionists affected to perpetuate;

* Lardner, VIII. 404—417. Mosheim, De Reb. Christ. Seculum Primum, sect. 70. Ittigius, De Hæresiarchis Ævi Apostolici, &c., sect. i. c. iv. v. Beausobre's Histoire Critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme, Lib. I. c. iii. Histoire Critique des Dogmes, &c. Lib. II. c. iv. Tillemont, Histoire Ecclés. I. 35—42, 54—59.

gh priest's daughter in marriage.* It is true, Epipha-
as is a writer of the fourth century, but it is not true
at this account depends, as some, to whom it has been
e occasion of considerable perplexity, have affirmed, on
s own authority alone. Methodius, who lived a century
rlier, bears a similar testimony.† These statements
ecome the more credible, from the fact that there is
ot the slightest evidence in all ecclesiastical antiquity
hat these pseudo-Christians ever professed to look on
esus Christ as the Messiah foretold by the prophets.‡
What space was necessary to extrude every thing properly
Christian from the creed of the Ebionites to this extent,
we are not required to determine; but that a community
with a creed so erroneous, and so devoid of all Christian
verity, should not only have been recognised as Christian,
but exhibited as a kind of model of Christian excellence,
is surely something extraordinary. To this effect, how-
ever, is the account given of this sect by Dr. Priestley.§

The sacred historian informs us, that from the begin-
ning there were "*many thousands of Jews who believed, and that all were zealous of the law.*"‖ We learn also, from the writings of the orthodox Justin Martyr, that there were Jews in his time who were properly successors of those earlier converts,—men who were in his view "believers," and yet "were zealous of the law." He speaks of them as Jews; and, notwithstanding these Jewish prepossessions and practices, as being of the same faith, and as partaking of the

* Opera. Adversus Hæreses, Lib. I. tom. ii. sect. 30, pp. 125, 140, 162. Ed. Coloniæ, 1682.

† Dr. Priestley's Early Opinions, III. 217. Sympos. p. 113. Ed. 1672, cited by Dr. Burton, in his Inquiry into the Heresies of the Apostolic Age, p. 500.

‡ Dr. Burton's Inquiry, pp. 505, 515.

§ Priestley's Early Opinions, III. 217, *et seq.* Mosheim, De Rebus Christ. Seculum Secundum, sect. 38—40. Ittigius, De Hæresiarchis Ævi post. Sect. I. c. vi.

‖ Acts xxi. 20.

same salvation with himself.* Could Justin possibly s
have spoken of these Hebrews, if he had regarded the
as believing only in the simple humanity of the Saviou
and as looking for some other deliverer as the promise
Messiah? The only reasonable conclusion is, that Justi
regarded the orthodox creed as the creed which had bee
generally embraced by converts from Judaism, in commo
with converts from among the Gentiles.

Those who insist that the Ebionites are the true an
only representatives of the first Jewish believers, en
deavour to vindicate their hypothesis on the followin
grounds:—In the first place, it is contended that th
Gnostics are the only persons calling themselves Chris
tians, who are censured as heretics by the earlier ecclesias
tical writers. To this assumption another is then added
viz: that certainly the Ebionites were not Gnostics. In
the next place, it is maintained, that the Nazarenes, an
the Jewish Christians generally, were the same with th
Ebionites; and that, in consequence, whatever is said im
plying the true Christianity of any of the professe
converts from Judaism, during the existence of the Ebio
ites, must also imply the true Christianity of the disciple
of Ebion. It is in this manner that an attempt is mad
to make it appear that this doubtful progeny should b
received as the legitimate offspring of the church at Jer
salem. A few words on the fallacy of this theory mus
suffice.

It is admitted that the history of Gnosticism is int
mately connected with the early history of the church
It is certain, moreover, that many of the expositions an
cautions in the later Scriptures of the New Testamen
were directed against the system of opinion so designated
One of its peculiarities was, that it did not admit th
authority of the Jewish prophets; another, that it denie

* Dial. cum Tryphone, p. 142.

and as conducting his 'disciples to perdition, it must appear strange, to the uninitiated in the arts of controversy, that Irenæus, of all men, should have been cited as judging very leniently of the Ebionite heresy. But he shall speak for himself on this matter. Making mention of the Saviour, he says—"Those who affirm that he is no more than man, begotten of Joseph, persisting in the bondage of their original disobedience, they perish, not receiving the Word of God the Father, nor liberty from the Son: as he has said, *If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* But being ignorant of Him, who, of a Virgin, is Emmanuel, they are deprived of his gift, which is eternal life: but not receiving the Word of incorruption (or the incorruptible Word) they continue in mortal flesh, and are debtors to death, rejecting the antidote of life."*

This extract alone is enough to show, that a more unauthorized appeal could not well have been made, than is that which has been made in this instance, and with so much confidence, by Dr. Priestly. Irenæus, in his many notices of the Ebionites, invariably describes them as heretics. He traces their origin, in common with that of the other heretical sects of whom he is treating, to Simon Magus. He speaks of them as one class of those offenders who receive a few fragments of revelation, but who are nevertheless condemned by what they do receive. They are denounced also as men who are judged, or convicted of their errors, by every spiritual or true believer. And beside the passage we have just cited, which, if language

* "Rursus autem qui nude tantum hominem eum dicunt ex Joseph generatum, perseverantes in servitute pristinæ inobedientiæ moriuntur, nondum commixtum Verbum Dei Patris, neque per Filium percipientes libertatem, quemadmodum ipse ait: Si Filius vos manumisserit, verè liberi eritis. Ignorantes autem eum, qui ex Virgine est Emmanuel, privantur munere ejus, quod est vita eterna: non recipientes autem Verbum incorruptionis, perseverant in carne mortali, et sunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitæ non accipientes."—Lib. III. c. 19.—not 21, as in Horsley and Jamieson.

has meaning, sets them forth as a people perishing in their perverse rejection of the truth, there are others, in a subsequent part of the same work, to the same effect.*

The identity of the Ebionites with the people known in ecclesiastical history under the name of Nazarenes, is a point which has been largely discussed, and one on which there is still a difference of opinion. The evidence from antiquity, as bearing on this point, may be so adduced as to seem to favour either opinion; but taken entirely, and fairly, the amount of testimony on the side of a difference as existing from the beginning, between the people to whom these different names were applied, will, I conceive, appear very much the strongest. The term Nazarene, however, though it certainly seems to have been always used to denote a sect distinct from the Ebionites, is never used so as to indicate that even the Nazarenes were regarded as properly orthodox. The writers who affirm that both these names were assigned to one and the same people, maintain also that the one people so designated consisted of the only Jewish professors of Christianity in early times; and that, in consequence, the Ebionites are the people so frequently alluded to by ancient writers as acknowledged Christians.†

* "Tanta est autem circa evangelia hæc firmitas, ut et ipsi heretici testimonium reddant eis, et ex ipsis egrediens unusquisque eorum coneter suam confirmare doctrinam. Ebeonei etenim, eo evangelio quod est secundum Matthæum, solo utentes, ex illo ipso convincuntur non recte præsumentes de Domino. Marcion autem id quod est secundum Lucam circumcidens, ex his quæ adhuc servantur penes eum, blasphemus in solum existentem Deum ostenditur."—Lib. III. c. xi. Similar passages occur in the first, third, fourth, and fifth books.

† Ittigus, De Hæresiarchis Ævi Apost. sect. i. c. vi. vii. Tillemont, Hist. Eccles. II. 104—110, 481, 486. The reader may find this topic largely discussed in Dr. Priestley's Early Opinions, III. 158—190, 201—219; Bishop Horsley's Tracts; Dr. Jamieson's Vindication of the Primitive Faith, Vol. II. B. V. c. v. sect. 2, 3; and in the notes to Dr. Burton's Inquiry, pp. 514—519. All these writers plead for a distinction between the two sects. The last author, who is, perhaps, the best modern guide on the question, insists, that

But this theory is not tenable. The testimony of Hegesippus alone is enough to refute it. The person bearing this name was a Jewish convert, who wrote about the middle of the second century. That he was himself orthodox is evident from the manner in which his testimony is appealed to by Eusebius; and from the fact that he was in communion with the church at Rome, while under the superintendence of three successive orthodox pastors —Anicetus, Soter, and Eleutherus.* Now, according to Hegesippus, the church at Jerusalem continued sound in the faith, agreeably to his views of soundness, until the martyrdom of Symeon, which brings us down to the dispersion of the Christians resident in that city after its siege under Vespasian. In short, the persons intended by the fathers, when they speak of Hebrews professing Christianity, and who were really Christians, were neither the Ebionites nor the Nazarenes, but those orthodox Jewish converts who had constituted the church at Jerusalem, who, on the final overthrow of that city under Adrian, were settled in Elia, a colony in its neighbourhood, and who, from that time, were gradually merged in the Gentile church.†

It may be worthy of remark also, that it appears from the language of Celsus, as cited by Origen, that the Jewish professors of Christianity who were observers of the law—and such it is always confessed were the Ebionites and Nazarenes—were wholly unknown to that close observer of the manners of the Christians.‡ We attach the more importance to this silence on the part of Celsus,

the fathers who distinguished between the Ebionites and Nazarenes, always speak of the latter as being in some sense heretics, in common with the former, and would thus annihilate the theory of Dr. Priestley by a different process from that adopted by Bishop Horsley and Dr. Jamieson.

* Irenæus, whose own orthodoxy is not questioned, testifies to the orthodoxy of these persons, Contra Hæreses, Lib. III. c. iii. iv.

† Euseb. Hist. Lib. IV. c. 8, 11, 21, 22, 23.

‡ Origen, Contra Cels. Lib. II. 385, 386.

inasmuch as he wrote in the time of Adrian, and with the clear foresight that any misconception on this point would be sure to be marked and exposed by his Christian antagonists.* The passage we regard as decisive in showing that the Ebionites and Nazarenes had really no existence until a period subsequent to the age of Adrian; or at least as sufficient to place it beyond dispute that these sects, so far from constituting the body of Jewish Christians, were a mere secession from that body, and one of the most insignificant description. That so much importance should seem, nevertheless, to have been attached to them in ecclesiastical history, is sufficiently explained by the fact, that the history of the church, as transmitted by the fathers, is much more the history of the corruptions of Christianity, than of Christianity itself. In more recent times, other causes, not less adventitious, have served to perpetuate the undue prominence assigned to these pretended believers.

There are other sects mentioned in the history of the early ages of the church, as the Elsesaites, the Marcosians, and the Sethians, whose opinions and practices were much influenced by their attachment to Judaism.† But these never became considerable. Nor does it comport with our present limits to dwell on the minute facts of history in this instance, or any other. What has been advanced in support of the views we entertain with regard to the general character of the Hebrew professors of Christianity was, on many accounts, necessary. But even here, our object has been rather to indicate the *nature*, than to adduce the *amount*, of the evidence available on this subject.

From the notices which have descended to us in relation to the whole of these sects, it is evident, that the causes which produced the grossest corruptions of revealed

* Origen, Contra Cels. Lib. II. 327.

† Lardner, II. 478. III. 194. VIII. 614—626, 428—478, 552—559.

truth among the Jews before the coming of our Lord, were causes which continued to produce their natural effects to a much later period. By these parties, especially by the Ebionites, all the distinguishing doctrines of Holy Writ were more or less discarded; and the scattered vestiges of truth that were retained, were mixed with errors in the greatest degree repugnant to them. If true believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, did not become corruptors of the Christian doctrine, even to the utmost, it was not because the times had failed to supply the stimulus of example in such a course of proceeding. We have not the means of tracing the influence of the Ebionite creed on the faith of the heretical sects belonging to the first three centuries. But in the writings of those sects, which history informs us were once widely circulated, appeals would no doubt be often made to the Ebionites, as to no mean authority in favour of the dogmas known to be maintained by them. If these Hebrew men were deceived as to the teaching of the Old and New Testament, who could hope to escape deception in that respect? In recent times, precisely this use has been made of the little that is known concerning this obscure sect,—considerable learning, and not a little ingenuity, having been employed to place them in court as witnesses against orthodoxy—so remote may be the ultimate influence of error!

Arianism, so memorable in its influence on the affairs of the church and of the empire, does not attract the attention of the ecclesiastical historian until the errors of Ebion have ceased to exist,—except as merged in the creed of the Gnostic sects, or in that of the disciples of Manes. It would not be difficult, however, to show, that Arianism owed its origin, in no small measure, to Judaism, as expounded by the Alexandrian Jews, and especially by their great representative, Philo. The mystical effusions of that writer on the character of the *Logos* were so little consistent, that those who regarded the Word as a person,

and those who understood by that term a mere attribute—those who spoke of the Word as a created existence, and those who used the term as denoting the Uncreated essence, might all appeal to the authority of this great Hebrew Platonist, as being in favour of their opinions. History relates that before the final destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews had filled up the measure of their fanaticism. Their Gentile conquerors never appeared to them so hateful. Christians, both from the Jews and Gentiles, professed to see the fulfilment of prophecy, and particularly of the sayings of their Lord, in the fate of the holy city, and were objects of special animosity. We have seen, that long before this time, causes had been at work among the Jewish people, disposing them to expect a leader of armies in the person of their Messiah; and the consequence of this capital error was, not only an oversight of the true object of the Redeemer's mission, but a necessary blindness to his true dignity. This degenerate tendency of the Jewish mind, was evidently accelerated by the calamities which marked their decline and disappearance as a nation. And of all the causes which served to confirm it, there was not one, perhaps, more potent than was found in the fact, that by maintaining this doctrine with regard to the character of their promised Deliverer, they placed themselves at direct issue with the Christians.

Arius, and his numerous disciples, were not strangers to the charge of having revived the errors of Ebion. But the doctrine of Arius derived its form and its strength almost exclusively from the mixture of Platonic and Oriental philosophy, which had long characterized the school of Alexandria, and particularly from the comments of Philo on the Hebrew Scriptures. Whatever the writings of Philo seemed to contain, opposed to the proper deity of the Saviour, would be seized with eagerness by the prejudice of the Jew, and would have uses no less obvious with the heterodox disputant among the Gentiles. The kind

of Unitarianism, which, from these causes, was s
lent among the Jews subsequent to the age of
could not fail to operate in favour of views part
that tendency among avowed Christians. "Su
Jews must be the best interpreters of their ow
tures," was then urged, as in modern times, and
little wisdom.*

That there was an intimate connexion between
history of Judaism, and the rise and power of
medanism, is unquestionable. The system of
worship, which was allied with so much corrupt
tion and usage in the Greek church, was in dire
sition to the spirit and letter both of the Old T
and the New. The inhabitants of Arabia, descei
Ishmael, had never ceased to retain some trac
revealed theism so conspicuous as the faith of t
archs. But in the seventh century, the barbaris
Arabians was extreme. In Mecca, their capit
single native could write or read. The Jews ar
tians in their neighbourhood were called the *peo*
book—books, or writing, being an element of ci
unknown among themselves. Such was the con
society over the whole world at that period,
escape of those untutored hordes from gross sup
and from idolatry as the most natural form of
have been pronounced impossible. But it shou
membered that the idolatry of the Arabians had it
of Hebrew recollections—recollections having
reference to Ishmael as their father, and to Ab
their greater progenitor. When Mohammed re
his enterprise as a religionist, there was much in
ology of the Jews as then corrupted; much in t

* Maimbourg's History of Arianism. Whitaker's Origin of Ari
both these writers should be read with caution. The works o
Mangey), and the narratives of Fleury, Tillemont, and Moshein
who do not ascend to more original sources,) furnish a better gu

rical associations of his country, and in the prepossessions and feelings of its people; and much, we may add, in the general corruption of the church and the world, favourable to his success. His own ignorance, indeed, (for even Mohammed could neither write nor read,) must have unfitted him for acting the part of a religious teacher, even among his unlettered countrymen, had he not obtained the assistance of a Hebrew scribe, by whose ingenuity Judaism was made largely available to his purpose,—the religion of Mohammed being, according to its author and his disciples, the same in substance with that of the patriarchs and of the Hebrew prophets. In short, if we credit this man —this memorable mixture of the enthusiast and impostor —we must suppose that true religion has been the same in its substance and spirit in every age; that in his day every portion of mankind had contributed, each in their own way, to destroy its purity; and that upon him it devolved, as the divinely-appointed successor of every preceding messenger from the Eternal, to bring about a renovation of the faith and character of mankind. It was his endeavour, as times and circumstances suggested, to conciliate all parties—Jews, Christians, Magians, and Idolaters. But the impress on his whole system, obvious on the slightest inspection, is that of Judaism, and of Judaism as grossly deteriorated in the course of the six centuries which had intervened since the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final dispersion of that people.* The Jew rejected Christianity as a delusion, the Mohammedan would supersede it as an imperfect truth; and both have contributed, in an eminent degree, to misrepresent and corrupt the genuine doctrines of revelation. Thus much, however, must suffice as to the influence of misconceptions of

* History of Mohammedanism, by Charles Mills, c. i. v. vi. D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, Tom. II. 648—657. Ed. 4to. 1777. Sale's Preliminary Discourse to his Translation of the Koran. Ockley's History of the Saracens.

Judaism on the TRUTHS of Christianity. Our rema space must be given to a brief review of its effect o Christian INSTITUTES.

II. When the gospel was first promulgated, the had long been distinguished by the ardour of his at ment to the religious institutions of his country. his subjection to a foreign power was felt compara little, so long as the services of the temple and o synagogue remained free from the polluting touch o heathen masters. It was in this direction, accordi that every Jew, on becoming a believer in the g would find "the sin most easily besetting him." T the law in its proper relation to the gospel would b great difficulty. And when it is remembered, th considerable a space intervened subsequently to th of Pentecost, during which the converts to Christi were principally from among the Jews, and left in a measure to their own guidance, it will be less a mat surprise that many of the observances of the law retained, along with the profession which was cert designed to have superseded them, even in the case c Jew.

On the propriety of retaining some admixture of sort, the Hebrew believers appear to have been of mind. Even by the apostles, this prejudice seems to been rather yielded to than resisted. But when the came for the admission of the Gentiles in great num to the church, the question necessarily arose,—ho this new and rapidly increasing class of converts was viewed as bound by the "*customs which Moses had lished.*" In the populous city of Antioch, where Gentile converts were numerous, this matter occasi so much perplexity, that it was deemed expedient to su the question, in the most formal manner, to the judg of the apostles, and of the church, at Jerusalem. result is very distinctly stated in the fifteenth chap

the Acts. We are there told, that "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to the apostles and brethren," that the Gentiles should be required to abstain "from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication;" but that in all other respects the ceremonial law should be to them as no longer existing. There is, moreover, the strongest reason for believing, that even these restrictions were not intended to be binding on the Gentiles as a body, but had reference exclusively to those converts from heathenism who were called "devout Gentiles," persons who had been Jewish proselytes before they became Christians.*

But however this may have been, it is sufficiently plain that this decision had respect to the Gentiles only, leaving the Jews to a continuance in their much-loved observances. What is more, the apostles themselves appear to have conformed, for some time, and in some important respects, to these usages—partly from some remains, it would seem, of national feeling, and partly, perhaps principally, from a wish to conciliate "their brethren according to the flesh." It is true, that even Peter speaks of the ceremonial law as a burden, which neither the men of his time, nor their devout forefathers, "were able to bear."† We must, in consequence, conclude that the legal services in any way sanctioned by any one of the apostles, were of a very modified and restricted description. Still it is a fact, that, as practised by Jewish converts, many Levitical usages, and even circumcision itself, were for some time tolerated by the inspired rulers of the church. Paul, speaking generally, was much less a conformist in this respect than his

* "As the observance of the old law was sanctioned in the case of those Christians who (as Jews) had been subject to it before their conversion; so in the case of the proselytes of the gate, that portion of it which extended to them received a similar sanction."—Hind's Early Progress of Christianity, I. 270.

† Acts xv. 10.

brethren; and appears to have furnished a useful example not only in the zeal with which he resisted all attempts to bring the bondage of the law on the Gentiles, but in the frequency and emphasis with which he declared the utter worthlessness of all such observances even among Jews. When such practices were the effect of a feeling which interfered not with the essential doctrines of Christianity, a humane consideration of the force of prejudice and habit led him to bear with them. But when made at all a ground of confidence before God, they were at once denounced as opposed to every thing which conferred value on the gospel.

We hesitate to speak of the apostles as consenting to a corruption of the institutions of the New Testament; and we find it still more difficult to suppose that they could themselves have been parties to practices that might be so described. But a conclusion too much of this character seems to be unavoidable, if we suppose that the dispensation of the gospel was really meant to put an end to the ritual of the law. That Peter erred thus far, when he withdrew from the Gentiles at Antioch, in deference to the intolerant feeling of his countrymen, is certain, from the tone of rebuke in which he was addressed by Paul, and to which it would seem he had no reply to make. His conduct in this instance is described as insincere, unjust, and "not according to the truth of the gospel;"* and there is nothing in Scripture to allow of our questioning the truth of this representation. We must remember carefully on this subject, that it does not follow because the *written* instructions of the apostles were inspired, except when they inform us otherwise, that the whole of their conduct was the effect of inspiration. The temporizing of Peter, which we have noticed, was evidently an exception of this kind; and how far the mistaken feeling which led

* Epist. Gal.

to his fault in that instance may have produced similar results in the case of himself, or of his brethren, on other occasions, we are by no means qualified to pronounce.

It must be evident that there would be much in the character and general conduct of the first Christians to require the forbearance on the part of their instructors. Their creed might embrace the substance of the truth; but in most cases it would be, in many respects, both defective and erroneous. Their spirit might exhibit the regenerating power of the gospel; but there would still be much in them needing to be subdued, much which they would still need to acquire. Thus it has ever been. And may we not reasonably ask—is it our failure as to religious *ritual*, and not our failure as to the religious *spirit*, which is to be excluded from the pale of charitable endurance? In addition to which, it demands an unusual effort of imagination to place ourselves in the precise circumstances of those Jews who were the first to avow themselves Christians, and to appreciate the whole force of the motives by which they were disposed to attempt a blending of the ritual to which they had been so long and justly attached, with their new religious profession. It must be confessed, that we are hardly capable of judging in this matter; and were a strict scrutiny to be prosecuted with regard to ourselves, in order to determine how far we have ourselves been guided by the prejudices of education in our religious preferences, there would, perhaps, be little room left for us to cast a stone against those brethren in the path of imperfection whose conduct is now under consideration. The toleration of error, of many shades and kinds, both as regards opinion and temper, is indispensable, in the present state of human nature, if what we call Christian communion is to exist. But while the less is not allowed to outweigh the greater, in such connexions, a different rule is insisted on where the question is about a ritual. Here, while one

termined very much by natural temperament. Narrow
hard minds will err on the side of proscription and severi
those of a more expanded and kindly temper, in the op
site direction.

But we must proceed to observe that the injury wh
has resulted to the Christian Institutes from a misapp
hension of Judaism on the part of the JEWS, is tri
compared with what has taken place from the same ca
among the GENTILES. The Jews professing Christia
subsequently to the apostolic age, were not sufficie
numerous or united to produce any very perceptible
pression on its condition through the world. But
Gentiles had also their hereditary prejudices, possess
too much in common with those of the Jews, in refere
to the institutions, ceremonies—visibilities of all kin
that should be associated with religion. If we supp
it to have been the will of the Redeemer that the remn
of Israel to be saved should be brought to substitute
simple ritual of the New Testament in the place of t
hereditary usages only by slow degrees, as *they were*
to bear it, (and this, after all, is perhaps the real solut
of the difficulty on which we have just been speakii
the same excuse cannot be urged in behalf of th
Gentiles who, at a later period, were wont to make s
fond appeals to the pomp and secularity connected w
religion under the law, as warranting a similar exhibiti
of it under the Gospel.

It might, indeed, have been presumed that the religi
customs of the Gentiles being so far similar to thos
the Jews, if a great forbearance was exercised in respe
such things in the case of converts from the one cl
would be only reasonable that somewhat of the
course should be pursued in reference to the othe
On this point, however, the Scriptures are most e
It is manifest that the same course was not pursue
two cases. The reason is plain. The rites of J

useless as they became after the introduction of the present dispensation, were parts of a system in itself of divine appointment; while those of paganism belonged to a false and impious worship. On the ground of this important distinction, the tolerance which was for some time shown to the one, was, from the beginning, wholly denied to the other. The tone of injunction addressed to Gentiles on this subject ever was, "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

In the spirit of this distinction, the apostle who circumcised Timothy, on account of his Jewish extraction, and in the hope thereby of procuring him a hearing with the Jews, not only refused to circumcise Titus, who was a Gentile, but called upon the Gentile converts, without exception, to come out from their idolatrous connexions, and not to "touch the unclean thing." So strict were the apostolic prohibitions with respect both to Jewish and Pagan customs, when addressed to Gentiles.

Now, whether we contend for the strict equality of the pastors in the primitive church, or concede that some distinction between bishop and presbyter did very early make its appearance, it must still remain evident, that nearly every thing in the form which ecclesiastical polity in the process of time assumed, was not only a marked change from the primitive standard, but a change which men attempted to justify, in almost every instance, by a reference to the institutions of Judaism. And the same may be said of the many contemporaneous changes in the departments of discipline and worship. It is true, the novelties in these several connexions were not in reality derived from Judaism, so much as from the state of things which had obtained in connexion with heathenism. But when men became disposed to incorporate these things with their profession as Christians, it was deemed prudent to palliate the introduction of them by a reference to what resembled them under the preceding dispensation,

rather than to confess their real origin. Had this app to the authority of Moses been made ingenuously, t unequivocal protest of St. Paul, especially in his epistle the Galatians, against all such admixtures, must ha been felt as fatal to the indulgence of such tastes. B at the commencement of the fourth century, the fondne for a paganized Christianity had become so general a so ardent, as to bear every thing before it; and mu before that time, converts from Judaism were so few, a so completely lost in the mass of Gentile believers, t they had ceased to be of any importance in ecclesiasti history.*

From this period, the writings of the Fathers abou with attempts to identify the polity and worship of the t dispensations. Every central or larger church is descrit as a temple, and set forth, in its various compartments, the resemblance of its great prototype at Jerusalem. T prince under whose auspices it may have risen, is laud as the Solomon of his age; and the person filling episcopal throne, if much concerned in the erection improvement, was hailed as another Zerubbabel. T ministers of the edifices so described, were very natura called priests, and distinguished by gradations of offi descending from the high-priest himself, down to t

* Mr. Hind notices the practice "of assigning a heathen origin to sev of the corruptions of the Christian church, which, although manifestly sembling heathen ceremonies, were immediately derived from the Jews," complains of it as an error.—(Hist. of the Early Progress of Christianit 263.) The fact is, however, as I have stated it; and were it otherwise, Judaizing of Gentiles, while professing themselves Christians, is as little ceptible of vindication as their symbolizing with heathenism. Mr. Hin an author of deserved reputation. It is, however, almost amusing to find describing Mosheim as "well read in *secondary* sources of information," as negligent and unskilful in the use of "original materials"! This defici is said to be especially observable "in his account of the constitution of primitive and apostolic church, especially of the episcopacy, and of the aut ity of church assemblies." (Pref. xiv.) With *one* class of the reader Mosheim, it is quite necessary that a cause of his supposed error on the p mentioned should be discovered, or at least imagined.

hewers of wood and drawers of water." All, moreover, were to be known from each other by their respective costume, as well as by the place or office assigned them in every public service. In their functions, the same parallel between the past and the present was preserved. Each rank had its special duties allotted to it; and as the Lord's table had become an altar, and his ministers priests, there was, as a matter of course, some sacrifice to offer, the eucharist being the service especially so regarded. In addition to which, all the religious sanctions employed to insure maintenance and wealth to the Jewish priesthood, were soon resorted to in aid of their successors in name and pretension. Hence, not only the private estates of the church, but the fixed and general endowment of tithes.* The mediatory character sustained by the descendants of Aaron, was eagerly seized by the shrewd ambition of a prosperous clergy; and that they might vend those spiritual commodities, which they assumed the sole right of dispensing, with the greatest advantage, the body of worshippers was formed into graduated classes, from the novice, within the outer wall, to the more advanced catechumen, and to the participant in the most sacred mysteries. All this, and more, was the condition which affairs assumed in the church immediately on her obtaining the patronage of the Emperor Constantine: and the easy vindication of the wondrous change was in the precedent of Hebrew sovereigns and of the Hebrew nation.† This was a plea level to every capacity,—a weapon which every hand could use. Had such practices been strictly peculiar to heathenism, we may conclude that the outrage of introducing them into the Christian church would have been too great to have been endured

* The Greeks adopted the Oriental custom of offering a *tenth* to the gods Potter, Antiq. Lib. II. c. 4.

† See Eusebius's account of the consecration of the church at Tyre, Eccles. Hist. Lib. X. c. iv.

or attempted; but as copied from Judaism, the innovation was less marked, and less liable to detection, at least with the unreflecting multitude, over whom such artistic achievements never fail to exert a powerful influence. Thus the distinct character of the two dispensations, and their true relation to each other, was artfully concealed. The authority of the sacred writers themselves was urged in favour of those maxims and manners under the gospel, which they had emphatically restricted to the ministration of the law; and the ministration of the Spirit brought down to the level of those "beggarly elements" which had characterized the dispensation designed to be nothing more than its harbinger and servant. The Judaizing of Hebrew converts in the primitive church, compared with such a course of proceeding, was almost excusable.

We scarcely need say, that what established Christianity became under Constantine, that it has continued to be in the greater part of Christendom to this day. In every opulent national church, whether Catholic or Protestant, the same manner of proceeding in this respect is observable. Were this matter left to be a question of mere taste or expediency, some difficulty might occur in an attempt to come to a decision upon it. An understanding properly cultivated, must hold all secular pomp and circumstance in connexion with religion as adapted rather to conceal than to exhibit its excellencies. But as the mind of the great majority is far from being the seat of refined perceptions and sympathies, the desirableness of such religious forms, as regards their influence on the greater portion of our race, has often been strenuously advocated by intelligent men. We shall have occasion to return to this subject before the conclusion of these Lectures; but must here distinctly observe, that the question has not been left to be decided by us. It is a matter of positive scriptural enactment that the ceremonial law is legally extinct: and it is abundantly plain that any continuance

of its forms, or of forms resembling them, in the Gentile church, is precisely that usage which the apostles barely tolerated, for a season, in the Jew, and sternly prohibited, from the first, to the Gentile. That these practices, while borrowed mainly from heathenism, and with a view solely to heathen prejudices, were set forth as sanctioned by the customs of the Judaic church, is a circumstance which only tends to add the guilt of fraud to the original offence.

LECTURE V.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE INFLUENCE OF GENTILE PHILOSOPHY.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
—COLOSSIANS II. 8.

PHILOSOPHY, according to the larger meaning of that term, embraces whatever may conduce to the well-being of humanity. Considered with respect to the physical sciences, it includes all the means by which the properties of the material universe are examined, and rendered obedient to our wishes. Viewed in relation to society, it comprehends the whole of that jurisprudence by which the distinctions of right and wrong are recognised, and the whole of those artificial arrangements by which such distinctions are enforced. But it is not enough that the heavens and the earth are made tributary, on a larger scale, to the wants of man; nor that the institutions belonging to his social state should be so constructed as to respect the interests of all, while acting as a stimulus to each. From what is adapted to the *necessities* of social life, men will advance to the things which *embellish* it, and hence the further developments of science, of the arts, and of literature.

Nor is this all. There remain other sympathies in man which require their appropriate objects. It is not the

earth, when rendered most obedient; it is not society, when its nice framework has been most wisely balanced; it is not art, when its most successful results are set forth in lavish abundance, that will lead men to say—it is enough. All these pertain to the visible; and it does not belong to human nature to suppose, that the only things to be realized, are the things which are seen. The spiritual, in some of its innumerable forms, must be added to the material, and the future to the present—and as having to do with these sympathies, in common with whatever relates to human nature, philosophy has been made to embrace religion. Under this term, as used by the ancients, all the branches of knowledge we have named were certainly included. In the language of its votaries, it was the science of investigation, of reflection, and of reasoning, which, while in itself nothing, embraced every thing, and methodised and sublimated every thing. That it enabled man to do much to elevate and adorn the present will be conceded; and if less successful when directed towards the invisible and the future, that happened, in great part, because the objects with which it affected to be conversant there were beyond its range.

The history of philosophy, therefore, may be described as the natural history of man. It is the history of his natural and moral capabilities—of what he has attempted, and of what he has done. It presents a varied picture, resulting from the widely different circumstances in which the several portions of the human family have been placed; and from the different degrees and kinds of attainment to which these circumstances have been favourable or otherwise. But its history is still the history of humanity, though the false may be too often more conspicuous than the true, and the evil greatly exceed the good. The philosophy of a people, if adequately treated, must present the most complete view of their character. It must exhibit the influence of their reason, and their natural tendencies, not in

regard to one thing, but to all things, determining both the complexion and extent of their general culture.

It follows, then, that, to be acquainted with the state of philosophy when Christianity was promulgated, is to be acquainted, not only with the general nature, but with the particular combination, or the mixed qualities of the material on which it had to operate. So also, to observe the fluctuations of the different philosophical systems in subsequent ages, is to become aware of the precise character of the difficulties, or the encouragements, which have been attendant on the history of the religion of Christ in later times.

I. The systems of philosophy which prevailed in the apostolic age may be all included under the designation of the Oriental, the Grecian, or the Roman. The Oriental had long pervaded the nations of the east. The Grecian had its origin in the Oriental, but included speculations and characteristics of its own—characteristics which before the commencement of the Christian era had been subject to some new modifications from the East and from Egypt. The Roman, toward the same period, was chiefly remarkable as made up of contributions from nearly all sources, being as various in its admixtures as were the provinces and peoples subject to the sway of the Cæsars. The character of each of these memorable results of human wisdom, or human weakness, is intimately connected with the design of these Lectures.

1. The Oriental Philosophy, after having long ministered to the pride and power of the most distinguished nations of Southern Asia and Northern India, was moulded into the form in which it is best known to us by the genius of the great Persian reformer, Zoroaster. It taught, as a leading doctrine, that the present world had derived its existence from two Causes or Principles, the one good and the other evil. The former was described as the parent of light, and of our spiritual and rational nature; the latter

as the parent of darkness, and of the form under which the gross substance now appears constituting this material system. These rival powers were viewed as being, in a sense, not only the creators, but the governors of the mixed condition of qualities observable in man and in the universe. Hence the perpetual conflict between good and evil in the natural and moral world. But above Ormuzd, the immediate source of all terrestrial good, and Arihman, the generator of all its evil, was Mithra—the supreme deity, whose appropriate emblem was the sun, or, in its absence, the sacred fire, which was never allowed to be extinguished. It was also the doctrine of Zoroaster, that beneath Ormuzd and Arihman, there were various spiritual natures, which had emanated from the Supreme Existence, and which had their graduated places assigned them in the vast space between the immediate presence of deity, and the humble condition allotted to man. These were said to partake of intelligence and happiness, in proportion to their nearness to the fountain of light and felicity; while matter became dark, inert, and liable to evil, as we now find it, purely as the consequence of the distance at which it is placed from the illuminating and spiritualizing influence of the centre of all being. Even matter, however, it was sometimes said, should, in its turn, be refined, —being attracted into the nearer presence of the Great One. Thus prepared for its sublime elevation, it was to be restored, together with the spirits of men, to the source from which it had proceeded. By others, the consummation of all things was regarded as consisting in the removal of matter to its original state of distance and separation from the spiritual universe.

It will be seen from these statements, that Ormuzd was regarded as being in some degree the *former*, rather than the *creator*, of the present world—matter, in the system of Zoroaster, being necessarily eternal. Nor is it difficult to account for the leading peculiarities of this system, fraught,

as it may seem, on a slight view of it, with absurdity. I assumed as a maxim by most of the ancients, that, " nothing, nothing can proceed;" and the immediate c quence of this assumption, as then understood, wa eternity of matter. The same conclusion followed, r over, from the doctrine which described matter as th cessary and inherent dwelling-place of evil; for, as su was not to be viewed as the production of a nature p in intelligence and rectitude. Hence it may be affir speaking strictly, that the philosophers of antiquity h knowledge of a Creator. Their history of all ma existences, whether considered on a larger or sm scale, was a history of successive transformations, an more. In the judgment of this class of persons, throu lands, the universe was but " the varied God:" a dev ment of the Infinite Existence, an effect of its oper or manifestations, in the pantheistic sense, all ch being included in the ceaseless acts of emission o sorption which belong to that Nature. But in the trine of the two principles, we see the effort of the h mind to explain the contradictory facts in the conditi man and of the universe; or, in other words, to accou the origin of evil, without ascribing it to the Supreme E With regard to the scheme of emanations, it res almost as a matter of course, from an attempt to fill t void which presents itself to the imagination as vening between the insignificance of man, and the ness of the Infinite. It will appear, in its proper that some of the most marked corruptions of Christi in its early history, resulted from the influence o system on the imaginative and mystical tendencies human mind prevalent among the great communit Egypt and Asia.

There is also another feature distinguishing the Or Philosophy, which should not be overlooked, as we making its appearance in a subsequent age in conn

with Christianity—we advert to the *theocratic* spirit by which it was pervaded. The nations of the east have had their diversities with respect to religion in common with the people of other regions, but they have always been agreed in regarding theology as their parent science. Not only their jurisprudence, but even their most abstract departments of knowledge, have been taught, either as parts of their religion, or as matters which must be retained in invariable subjection to it. According to the philosophy which has most widely obtained among them, there is an Eternal Principle, which is every thing, and man is nothing. It is from their conceptions of this principle that all their knowledge has its impress and its appropriation—exhibiting the experience and actions of men, and even man himself, as no more than parts of one varied mode of subsistence which we call *nature*, and which is in fact the ever-changing manifestation of an ever-moving energy, assigning existence or decay, without cessation, and with equal indifference, to the inert and the animate, insects and men. It is true, the spirit of theocracy, which disclosed itself by slow degrees in ecclesiastical history, was not founded on a theology in all respects of this mysterious and terrible description. But the degree in which this tendency of orientalism affected a large mass of persons, and many great names, among the Christians of the first four centuries, did much to prepare the way for that reign of the *priest-caste* by which even Western Christendom was so long enslaved. Every one must perceive that the tendency of the Oriental Philosophy, whether viewed in its earlier stages, or in its later forms of Gnosticism and Manicheism, was to induce a disposition to luxuriate, rather than to act—to endure, rather than to dare. Submission was its great law. Hence its invariable alliance with civil despotism; and to the same cause we must, in a great degree, ascribe the marvellous fixedness of its character. Its principles and

its results in the age of Alexander, were precisely those which distinguish it through the East at this day.

Of its moral influence it is not easy to speak with accuracy. By teaching men to regard their souls only as the offspring of the good principle, and their bodies as the production of the evil one, it ministered to practical conclusions of the most opposite description. On the ground of this doctrine, the ascetic professed to place the perfection of religion in the severest subjection of the appetites, and the most complete separation from sensible objects. By the voluptuary, on the contrary, it was argued, that the indulgence of the animal passions could hardly partake of criminality, otherwise religion must be, in some sense, an attribute of matter as well as of mind,—a conclusion which contravened the leading dogma of Orientalism. It is not necessary to dwell, in this place, on the visionary, and often painful excesses to which the former of these opinions naturally led; nor on the sophistry which must have been employed to render the latter at all plausible.*

II. Leaving Egypt, Southern and Eastern Asia, and passing along the plains of Asia-Minor, we reach the seat of Troy, and the eye rests on that flow of waters which breaks on the islands and shores of Greece in its passage toward the Mediterranean sea—"the great sea" of the ancient world. It was among the people of this more favoured region that philosophy began to assume an independent character. Here it ceased to be a mere appendage to the priest's office; and was cultivated, in not a few of its departments, with an energy and success which later generations have rarely equalled, never exceeded.

It is important, however, to remember, that the elements

* Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. I. 102—228. II. 639—652. Mosheim, De Rebus ante Constant. Introd. Beausobre, Histoire de Manichée, I. 241—335. Matter. Hist. du Gnostisme.

of the early Greek character, whether good or evil, were necessarily of oriental origin. The branch also shared, for a time, in certain feeble properties observable in the parent stem, but lived to inhale a vigour peculiar to itself. From the East, where the truths of revelation were first promulgated, but where they were so soon forgotten or corrupted, the fathers of the Grecian states derived their language, their alphabet, their early institutions, and their doctrines in relation to the origin and government of the universe. But these doctrines, though long retained, more or less, by speculative and learned men, soon ceased to perplex the popular apprehension. The polytheism which commended itself so strongly to the more inventive and practical genius of the Greeks, taught them to worship the attributes of humanity, in preference to those elements, laws, or forces of nature, which exercised so much sway over the imagination of the Asiatic. This change, though it may seem a descent, was, with all its faults, a change in advance.

But, unhappily, it is not in reference to religion, the subject with which we now have chiefly to do, that the Greeks filled the most advanced position as compared with other nations. A mere glance at the leading tenets of the sects which obtained among them, will be sufficient to show, that with respect to some of the most important matters in the range of human speculation, "professing themselves to be wise they became foolish."

The doctrines maintained by the most celebrated sects in Greece at the commencement of the Christian era, in respect to the nature and claims of the powers above humanity, were such, as not only to fail to impart the knowledge of the Divine Nature needed by mankind, but such as effectually to preclude it.

The Epicureans, who were a sort of pagan Sadducees, admitted the existence of some divine power, but denied its interference or oversight with regard to human affairs.

subject, that beside the obscure, defective, and necessarily barren conception of the Deity common to all these sects there was the fact, that the doctrine of a future state was generally doubted, if not denied by them; and that the influence of the Divine Being over the affairs of men was invariably excluded, either by a supposed law of necessity, or by the assumption of his voluntary abstraction from our low concerns. When these points are considered, we can scarcely forbear to ask, where, in these boasted results of human wisdom, are the motives that could have led to any thing deserving the name of true religion? Experience demonstrates, that if man is to be religious, it must be in reference to a personal Deity, and a personal Deity concerning himself with human affairs. Separate the Supreme Being from such concern for man, and his imagination will introduce other natures as thus nearly related to him, and thus polytheism will come into the place of monotheism. But at the same time, no man can be acquainted with the life of Cicero, the Academic, or with that of Cato Utica, the Stoic, without perceiving that however faulty the foundations of their religious systems may have been, the superstructure connected with such systems might sometimes be found to present much deserving of praise. While such men, however, were, in the moral elevation of their character, greatly better than their creed, it is manifest that the majority availed themselves of its vicious license, and to the full.*

* Lactantius was aware both of the excellencies and defects of this class of instructors: "Plato et Aristoteles, honesta quidem, voluntate justitiam defendere cupierunt; effecissentque aliquid, si conatus eorum bonos, si eloquentiam, si virtutem ingenii, divinarum quoque rerum doctrina juvisset. Itaque opus illorum inane atque inutile jacuit; nec cuiquam hominum persuadere potuerunt, ut eorum prescripto viveret, quia fundamentum a cœlo disciplina illa non habuit. Nostrum opus certuis sit necesse est, quos Deus docuit."—Lactant. Div. Institut. Lib. V. c. xvii. See also Dr. Clarke's Discourse concerning the obligations of Natural Religion, pp. 327—370. Mosheim, De Rebus ante Constant. Introd. c. i. sect. xx. xxi.

Plato was, in nearly all respects, the most successful of ıilosophers. In his speculations, the Parent of the ıiverse is regarded as its governor, and as being separate ı his nature from all material things. From his purely piritual existence proceed the souls of men, which, on ccount of the spirituality of their being, are, like himself, mmortal. With the immortality of the soul this philoso- ıher connected the doctrine of future rewards and punish- nents; and by means of these sanctions, together with ıis better code of morals, and his more rational views of he divine perfections, he conferred much permanent benefit on mankind. But it will not be supposed that the visions of Plato are always trustworthy. The truth an- nounced by him had its strong admixtures of error. "Not to mention," says Mosheim, "his frequent assumption of things without proof, he often expresses himself in an enigmatical form; ascribing to the power which he praises as the architect of the world, and its former from an eternal substance, neither infinitude, immensity, omni- presence, nor omniscience, but supposing him to be con- fined within certain limits, and to have committed the government of the world to a number of ministers called *demons*. What he teaches concerning these demons, and concerning the origin and condition of the human soul, tends very strongly to produce superstition, and to confirm men in the worship of subordinate divinities. The mind, while connected with the body, he viewed as in a prison, and inculcated, that its escape from this thraldom, and its restoration to its proper state of alliance with the divine nature, could only be accomplished by means of con- templation. The effect of this doctrine on the mind of the weak and the speculative was to produce a neglect of the body, and of the ordinary concerns of life, and a disposition to abandon themselves to the dreams of the imagination."*

* De Rebus ante Constant. Introd. c. i. sect. xxix.

mentioned, that it so far prevailed as to become the rallying point of a powerful sect.*

Nothing could be more in harmony with the genius of Rome than this eclectic principle. The vastness of her empire was opposed to sectarianism, and prepared her citizens to expect something worthy, not only of toleration, but of approval, every where. But it was not until within a century of the Christian era, that the authorities among that extraordinary people can be said to have granted even toleration to the study of philosophy, considered as a science. That proud hardihood, and that preference of the useful, which is so long observable in the character and manners of the ancient Romans, taught them to suspect such studies of tendencies unfavourable to morality and manliness. The degeneracy which had come upon Greece, did much to strengthen and perpetuate this prejudice; nor was it ever so far subdued as to allow of the formation of schools of philosophy, or to favour the existence of a class of men separated to teach it, as among the Greeks. There were a few who became distinguished as philosophers in the Greek sense; but even Seneca, and Pliny the naturalist, were as much statesmen as philosophers. In Rome, the investigations and discussions of philosophy were the employment of leisure hours only; those who were most distinguished by their attention to it being generally much better known from their success as public functionaries, or as men versed in practical affairs.† Examples of this kind are seen in Scipio Africanus, in Marcus Brutus, and in Cato Utica. Cicero, as is well known, distinguished himself in the separate pursuits of

* Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. Tom. II. Pars I. cap. ii. sect. iv. Matter Essai Historique sur l'Ecole d'Alexandrie, II. 130—137, 236, 252.

† "At populo Romano nunquam ea copia fuit: quia prudentissimus quisque negotiosus maxime erat: ingenium nemo sine corpore exercebat: optimus quisque facere, quam dicere: sua ab aliis bene facta laudari, quam ipse aliorum narrare, malebat."—Sallust, Bellum Catalinarium.

ther evidence as to the sufficiency of virtue alone fo human happiness. In short, all the uncertainty and erro which had characterised the speculations of the ancient on the divine nature, and the government of the world were necessarily interwoven, in their various consequences with the ancient system of morals. The need was, of a instructor who should reveal "the unknown God," an who, by the light of that manifestation, should exhibit a once the true condition, and, as consequent on that, th true obligation of human nature.

Another observation urged upon us by this review o the ancient systems of philosophy, and one intimately connected with our immediate object, is the proof whic it affords of the determination of mankind to render al systems of opinion subservient to what may happen to b their own particular and favourite tendencies.

What do we see in all these systems but a reflec tion of the same varied humanity with which we stil have to do? We see schools and instructors make their appearance, of a character in the strictest agreemen with the different circumstances, and the differences i temperament, which have never failed to separate th human family into classes. We see the doctrine of Pytha goras, whether published in Greece or Italy, producing its effect on the ascetic; while the contemplative are no less attracted by that of Plato. Men of severe habits, bu withal of active dispositions, choose the schools of Zeno a their favourite resort; while such as are inclined to a life of ease and indulgence, bestow their preference on th gardens of Epicurus. And if even Plato should not b visionary enough to meet the demands of the human imagination, there were the flights of the Oriental philo sophy, presenting an almost boundless space for th excursions of that treacherous faculty. In all these sys tems—equally the work of man—the impress is from man himself. They are at once the demand and supply

his nature. He would have them exist, and he gives them existence. It is his pleasure to be what he is; and it is his pleasure that the acknowledged principles of duty and religion should approve of his being such; and these principles, that they may be thus conformed to the different inclinations of men, have been made subject to changes, modifications, and admixtures, which within our limits can be but very partially described.

It must appear, then, that, to ascertain the sources of opinion or usage, in ancient as in modern times, it will not be well that we ascend to the regions of abstraction, or of metaphysics, where intellect may find its home quite apart from every thing distinctive of the actual condition of humanity in the world about us. On the contrary, it will be much wiser to acquaint ourselves with those peculiarities in mental character, in physical condition, and general circumstances, by which mankind have always been influenced, so as to present at once the variety and the sameness by which human nature has ever been distinguished. The capability which attaches to human reason, separately considered, affords no adequate explanation of the diversities observable in human opinion. This chaos of results must be traced to those endless combinations in the natural and social state of mankind, which contribute so mightily to the work of education, in the most extended view of it; and also to the reaction of education, thus viewed, on what may have been the native tendencies of the mind, or of the temperament. When judging of the notions avowed by any portion of a community, whether in the present or the past, this course of proceeding, so little flattering to our presumed independence, ingenuousness, and sufficiency, as rational creatures, is the only one that can lead to just conclusions. Men, unhappily, are not governed by evidence;—a more powerful arbiter is found in causes which lie beyond the province of pure intellect.

It is not, then, too much to affirm, that after philosophy

that would be evinced with regard to Christianity from his own grateful estimate of its value, more than from an adequate attention to the hostility in reference to it which is inherent in the present condition of human nature. Taking our stand at Jerusalem, and looking abroad over the intellectual and moral state of the kingdoms of the world, could we expect that the message of salvation, however well attested, would be generally embraced? Or, that if embraced, it would be preserved from the corruption with which it would be every where threatened on the part of the wisdom of this world? Could we expect that the Stoic would at once receive its precepts of humility and kindliness? Or that the Epicurean would at once approve its law of self-denial, and of religious earnestness? Could we persuade ourselves that the Oriental visionary would readily bring his vain imagination to the obedience of a sober faith? Or that the admirers of the celestial Plato would soon learn to credit the existence of a greater Master? The conclusion to which calm reflection would conduct us, while looking over such a scene, would rather be, that unless a power should accompany the gospel, greatly exceeding what had been hitherto connected even with revealed truth, or than would seem to comport with the purpose of the divine government in its relation to our world, the result would be much of the kind which history has presented.

The humble Christian will only need call to mind the facts which have become familiar to him in the lives of the prophets, and in the narratives of the New Testament, to be convinced that it is not the importance of the message, nor the sanctity of the messenger, nor the evidence of miracles, nor even the ordinary spiritual influences from on high, that will prove successful in removing the blindness to which the majority of mankind have ever been willing to submit themselves. And with regard to those who place no faith in the gospel, and who make

forcible and so true, as by the Romans then
this period. And these pictures, presented b
as Seneca and Tacitus, Juvenal and Lucan
their vividness and strength to the fact, th
thus described, every such man saw the actua
his personal liberty, and the base power wl
shadowed the glory of his country. To
gloomy reprobation of vice until it becomes
and then to pour out upon it the vengeance
heart, as upon some real antagonist, may be
but it was all that now remained to the prou

The Emperor Adrian was a professed pa
sophy, and he often courted discussion wit
men about him. But it soon became kn
teacher of wisdom who should refuse the ap
triumph on such occasions to his imperial
hazard, not only court favour, but even life i

* In the age of Augustus, the rescripts of the new sov
in place of the ordinances of the people, and acquired th
the authority of the senate giving place in all important
the Emperors, and the people being excluded from all pa
government, and even from electing their own magistrates

"——— Jampridem, ex quo suffragia nulli
Vendimus, effugit curas. Nam qui dabat olim
Imperium, fasces, legiones, omnia, nunc se
Continet, atque duas tantum res anxius optat,
Panem et Circenses."

"But long, long since the times have chang'd their
The people grown degenerate and base;
Not suffered now the freedom of their choice,
To make their magistrates and sell their voice.
Our wise forefathers, great by sea and land,
Had once the pow'r and absolute command;
All offices of trust themselves dispos'd.
But we, who give our native rights away,
And our enslav'd posterity betray,
Are now reduc'd to beg an alms, and go
On holidays to see a puppet-show."

ver.
by a
anew,

There is no direct mention of Gnosticism in the Ne Testament, but both Paul and John make distinct ar grave allusions to it.* And the heresies which agitat the Church, and did so much to corrupt the gospel, durir the first and second centuries, proceeded almost entire from one of two sources—from the Ebionites or from tl Gnostics. The extent to which the doctrines of Gn sticism were diffused, when we consider their contradictio and absurdities, is almost incredible. It could not hav become thus prevalent had not the causes predisposing t such a result been widely spread; and the fact that the causes existed in such force is sufficient to indicate th danger to which the *seed of the kingdom* must have bee exposed, as deposited in such a soil: especially when it remembered, that Gnosticism was, properly, a branch that Eclecticism which sought to propitiate all parties l affecting to hold much in common with them all.

The theory of the Gnostics, like that of the Eclectic existed long before it became known by the name und which it is known to us. Ammonius Sacca, under who presidency the Eclectic school of Alexandria rose to i highest celebrity, died toward the middle of the thi century. As this philosopher left nothing in writin nearly all we know with respect to his history and d trine, is derived incidentally from the works of his disciple This distinguished preceptor, whose chair was always su rounded by pupils both from the heathen and Christi schools, was the son of Christian parents, and receiv the rudiments of his religious and philosophical educati in the Christian seminary in Alexandria, which had be

presenting so complete a view of the Gnostics' doctrines, as will be found that of M. J. Matter, professor at Strasburgh, under the following title:—H toire Critique du Gnosticisme, et de son Influence sur les Sectes religieuse philosophiques des six premiers Siècles de l'Ere Chretienne, 2 vols. Pa 1828. Neander has also written a work on this subject, (Berlin, 1818,) whi is highly commended by Matter, pref. p. iv.

* 1 Tim. i. 3,4; vi. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 16; Titus iii. 9; Col. ii. 8.

conducted in succession by Athenagoras, Pantenas, and Clemens. It was in this school that Ammonius imbibed his love of philosophical studies, and formed his purpose of attempting more than had hitherto been done in the way of assimilating the opinions and sentiments of mankind on questions of philosophy and religion. According to his followers, this arduous enterprise was not entered upon in vain. That it procured him much applause is certain, but one effect of the experiment appears to have been the loss of his Christianity. It is not certain, indeed, nor even probable, that he ever openly renounced the faith in which he had been educated. But we are not sure that the place which he assigned to Jesus Christ was much in precedence of that which he allotted to Pythagoras and Plato.

In common with other philosophers, and in imitation of the mysteries of paganism, Ammonius taught a double doctrine, his sublimer instructions being reserved for the initiated, and delivered under the veil of an impenetrable secrecy. Concerning the nature of these secret dogmas little is known, except as learnt from the intimations or known opinions of his pupils and successors. Among his auditors was the author of the immortal "Treatise on the Sublime." But the most distinguished persons among his more zealous adherents, were Plotinus and Porphyry, men in whom that mixture of superstition and fanaticism, which had become so characteristic of the Eclectics, as the new Platonists of Alexandria were called, were but too faithfully reflected.*

It was manifestly the ambition of Plotinus to tread in the steps of Apollonius; and could we credit the tales of Porphyry, his biographer, we must admit, with that credu-

* Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. Tom. II. Lib. I. c. ii. sect. iv. Mosheim, De Reb. Constant. Introd. Chap. I. sect. xxx. Seculum Secundum, sect. xxv.—xxxii. Matter, Essai Historique sur l'Ecole d'Alexandrie, II. 130—137, 236—262.

lous enemy of Christianity, that the supernatural powers realized by this enthusiast were not less wonderful than those ascribed to the first preachers of the gospel. His contempt of the body, as the prison or clog of the soul, taught him to neglect the means necessary for the preservation of his health, and exposed him to much suffering from premature old age and disease. Porphyry assures us, that this favourite of philosophy so far improved on his predecessors in the Platonic science of contemplation, as to have approached more nearly than any mortal had hitherto done toward the actual vision of the Infinite! We have sufficient evidence that Plotinus was often the victim of a vain imagination, mistaking the glare of enthusiasm for the light of truth; the visions of fancy, for the realities of reason. Such, however, was the man who, after the manner of Apollonius, won favour of kings, and homage almost every where, which wiser and better men had failed to secure. In the philosophy to which Plotinus was devoted, the most turbulent mysticism was united with the most dreamy or fraudulent pretensions to supernatural power. Such, nevertheless, was the kind of philosophy, which, in the third century, the whole world did worship. In every seat of learning it was especially favoured; and in the schools of Christianity it had its work of evil to do.*

Porphyry, so memorable from his attack on Christianity, and his zeal in the cause of the established Paganism, was a favourite disciple of Plotinus. He wrote no less than fifteen treatises in opposition to the gospel. By the mistaken policy of the emperor Theodosius, all the copies of these works that could be procured were destroyed; so that our knowledge of their character can only be inferred from the fragments preserved in the writings of others,

* Fabricius. Biblioth. Græc. Tom. IV. *et seq.* Bayle's Dict. Tom. III. Art. Plotin. Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. Tom. II. pp. 217—231.

and from the few productions by the same author, which, as being less Antichristian in their substance, were allowed to survive. But from these sources, it is manifest enough, that Porphyry, while a man of erudition, and a writer possessing much command of language, was a person so far spoiled by his philosophy, as to be much more under the influence of his passions and his imagination, than of his reason. We might say thus much, and leave his moral character untouched; but his accounts of the marvellous are such as we find it exceedingly difficult to look upon as the effects of mere credulity. Often, we think, they must have proceeded from that more doubtful source whence so many pious frauds have had their origin. In the thirty-sixth year of his age, Porphyry's impassioned Platonism taught him to meditate suicide, as presenting the shortest means of escape from the prison of the body. But he lived so far to subdue the intrusions of the flesh, as to partake of special communications from heaven, and to become, in some sense, a divine person. It is from himself we learn, that in one of his sacred ecstacies, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, he was admitted to a sight of the Supreme Intelligence, the one source of gods and men, without the intervention of similitude or veil! The opinions embraced by minds of this temperament are rarely, if ever, the result of evidence. Their reason is their feeblest faculty; and they are, in consequence, wedded to misgovernment. Jamblicus, who succeeded Porphyry in office and celebrity, possessed not the eloquence of his master, but fully imbibed his mysticism, and went much beyond him in his pretensions to supernatural attainment.*

But without further mention of names, it must suffice

* Tillemont, Hist. Emper. Tom. IV. 67—75, 611—613. Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philos. Tom. II. pp. 236—260. Matter. Essai Historique, II. 262—268.

to remark, that the history of the heathen philosophy this period, presents a continued deterioration c system of Porphyry. The short reign of Julian w an exception in this respect. Superstition, fraud fanatical presumption, became more and more don in it, until Mohammed swept the whole race of t from the earth, thus preparing the way for that junction between the learning of the East and West which another age of philosophy took its rise—the a mean, of the Christian Schoolmen.

This hasty glance at the ancient systems of philo has been rendered necessary by the fact that, the doc included in them, soon became connected, in di modes and degrees, with Christianity, and contr greatly to place it before us as we find it in ecclesi history. But the general information which such a spect conveys, in regard to the character and hist the human mind generally, should not be uninter We yield to a vulgar delusion, if we suppose that by-gone opinions are matters with which we can h practical concern. The records of folly and extrav may suggest the lessons of wisdom and mode They are beacons along the troubled sea we have to gate; and which, so far from being valueless, may the most efficient means of our personal safety. indifferent to these instances of failure or excess, attempting to judge as to the capacity of the human in regard to such speculations, is to exclude from science the advantage so much coveted elsewher advantage of testing theory by experiment. The aberrations on the subject of religion, and on many matters, in our own time, are really little else than a rence of former errors, and a recurrence of them which not have taken place, at least to the same extent, if struction furnished by the past had been duly imp When, for example, we see our contemporaries sedu

pretenders to supernatural powers and special inspiration; when we see the most ascetic airs of spirituality assumed by those who care little about the control of their malevolent passions; when we see enormous pride, aiming to realize its objects under the garb of a theatrical humility — is it nothing to know that these are only some of the old frauds which human nature has been ever practising, now upon itself, now upon others, sometimes in connexion with the true religion, sometimes with the false, and sometimes without the aid of any religious influence whatsoever? Man is, indeed, a mysterious being—his heart, "who can know it?" The web of his mental and moral state is always woven from innumerable threads; and those who have studied his history the most, are most convinced, that in more than one respect he is "fearfully and wonderfully made." A sense of our common danger should induce a common sympathy, and lead us not only to implore the divine guidance for ourselves, but to intercede with the tenderest solicitude for such as may have erred from the truth.

But from the review to which this Lecture has been devoted, we have, in conclusion, to observe, that nearly all the error, whether speculative or practical, that has been imputed to our early Christianity as its peculiar possession, had long been established in the schools of the most renowned of its adversaries.* It is not true, as often insinuated, that the term philosophy was significant in those ages of large and generous thought. On the contrary, it was applied to a state of things in which all those corruptions and imbecilities, and more than all, with which the sceptic affects to be so scandalized, as found in the speculations or doings of ecclesiastics, were constantly

* "Upon a full inspection, it will be seen that the corruption of Christianity was itself the effect of that vitiated state of the human mind, of which the vices of the government were the primary cause."—Edinburgh Review, Vol. XXIII. p. 238.

presenting themselves. There is an end that may be answered by using the term philosophy as descriptive of every thing matured and refined in human intelligence, and by giving all the credit of such intelligence to the early opponents of the gospel. It is possible to give a studied prominence to the growing corruptions of Christianity upon the one hand, and to throw a veil over the vicious and pitiable exhibitions taking place in the schools of philosophy on the other, so as to make it appear that the struggle which issued in favour of the church, was one in which an enlightened humanity was laid prostrate by the power of a degrading superstition; but whatever may be the expediency of such a course of proceeding, a representation more contrary to fact, the arts of perfidy could not readily devise. It was not from Christianity that the morals or religion of the Roman empire derived their corruption. The people who could bow so submissively to the yoke of Nero, and who, from the highest to the lowest, could render divine honours to such pretenders as Apollonius, had little to lose in the way of public spirit, and could not well be more enslaved to superstition. We could wish that Christianity had remained free from the dreams of mysticism, from the excesses of monkery, from the wiles of imposture, and from a thousand other mischiefs which are sure to make their appearance where superstition becomes rife. But we may extend our sympathies a little further, and lament that the schools of philosophy should have fallen under such influences, quite as much as the churches of the believers—not excepting the ablest among the followers of Plotinus, among the sophists of Julian, and even Julian himself.* Known, and never forgotten, should it be, that the philosophy of the schools with which

* Julian spent his winter nights in publishing, with the advantage of his name and authority, the long-exploded arguments of Celsus, Hierocles, and Porphyry, against Christianity, adopting the credulous fancies of those writers as his own. The "Eulogium on the Mother of the Gods" (Orat. V.)

these names are associated, embraced all the errors and follies which proved most hostile to the purity of the Christian religion. The corruptions of philosophy preceded the corruptions of Christianity, and the latter were derived largely from the former. The object of the two ensuing Lectures will be to show the truth of this general statement.

furnishes sufficient proof of the extravagance in which this extraordinary person could sometimes indulge. Gibbon regards Julian with a feeling of favouritism; but it is thus the historian is constrained to speak of him:— "The pious Emperor condescends to relate, without a blush and without a smile, the voyage of the goddess from the shores of Pergamos to the mouth of the Tiber; and the stupendous miracle which convinced the senate and people of Rome that the lump of clay which their ambassadors transported over the seas, was endowed with life and sentiment, and divine power. For the truth of this prodigy he appeals to the public monuments of the city; and censures, with some acrimony, the sickly and affected taste of those men who impertinently derided the sacred tradition of their ancestors."

as commendable, whenever such speculation happens to be in affinity with his own; and denounces it when wanting in that ground of recommendation. On this subject nearly all parties agree in casting much reproach on the Fathers; but it is a reproach which, from these causes, is of various amount, and variously applied.

The errors of this class of writers are formidable enough, without making their good sense and humanity, as is often done, a ground of accusation against them. Justin Martyr addressed an apology in the cause of his persecuted fellow-Christians to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, who boasted in the name of philosopher, as well as of being the father of his people. In the course of this address, the apologist justifies himself in calling the Redeemer the Son of God, by observing that such language should not be deemed strange by men "who were wont to speak of Jupiter as having sons, and especially of Mercury as his Interpreter, and the Instructor of all men." Again he remarks, "If Christ be a mere man, yet he deserves to be called the Son of God on account of his wisdom, the ancients describing their Jupiter as the father of gods and men; and if in an extraordinary manner he be the logos of God, this is in common with those who call Mercury the logos, he declaring the will of God." Now these passages are cited by Dr. Priestley, and by some less prejudiced writers before him, as demonstrating the readiness of Justin to modify, and even to merge, the doctrines of the gospel, in compliance with popular humour, or the taste of the learned.* But the conclusion in this instance may be fairly regarded as not altogether warranted by the premises.

When the ground on which an obnoxious doctrine rests is admitted by the opponents of that doctrine, we do not abandon that doctrine because we venture to remind such

* History of the Corruptions of Christianity, I. 33. Casaubon, *in loc.* Daille's Use of the Fathers.

opponents of their inconsistency, in taking exception to a course of argument in one connexion, which they admit to be valid in another. Nothing, as every one knows, is more common, or more legitimate, than this manner of reasoning. The object of Justin, in the passages adduced, was simply to show, that, whatever might be his real doctrine, the parties objecting to the language he had employed were condemned out of their own mouth. Many such passages have been cited from the Fathers, as betraying a disposition to corrupt the truths of revelation, in the hope of conciliating the heathen. That there were instances in which a compromise of this nature was attempted is not denied. But even in such cases, it is far from being in our power to determine the amount of culpable motive that may have been in exercise. And it must always become us to do our best to distinguish between such excesses, and a laudable effort to show, that men *ought*, from their acknowledged principles in other connexions, to be prepared to submit to the authority of the gospel.

Indeed, it remains to be shown, that there was any thing in the conduct of the early ecclesiastical writers in appealing to the things existing in common between Christianity and heathenism, that is not consonant with all our ideas concerning the uses of analogical reasoning. What is true of man, may be true of the revelation which the Maker of man has given him. So what is true of nature, may be true of the message supposed to have come to us from the Author of nature. There should be no more to condemn in Justin Martyr, or Origen, because they reason after this manner, than in Bishop Butler, because he so reasons in his "Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed," or in Bishop Shuttleworth, because he reasons thus in his "Revelation consistent with Itself, and with Human Reason." The great design of both these writers, is to lead the mind from the known and acknowledged, to the unknown and unacknowledged;—or to make the truth

confessed subserve the admission of the higher but kindred truth which is disputed. And what bears immediately on this point, there is a passage in Origen which is not only competent of itself to have suggested the great argument of the "Analogy of Religion," but bishop Butler has himself cited this passage, and in such a manner as almost to warrant a belief that such was the fact. "He who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature," says that Father, "may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of nature."* Thus Origen was concerned to make precisely that use of the constitution and the course of nature, which the ancient Christian writers in general were disposed to make of the received systems both of philosophy and religion. The appeal to the one and the other was on the same principle—to silence objections, as an important advance toward the establishment of truth. In a word, had these persons determined not to avail themselves, in this manner, of the truth discoverable either in the philosophy or the paganism of their times, such a determination would have been construed as more to their discredit than some excess on the opposite side. A poet of our own has said,

> Seize on truth where'er 'tis found,
> On Christian or on Heathen ground.

Nor must we leave this subject without observing, that the writers who are charged with having accommodated the doctrines of Holy Writ to the prepossessions of the heathen, so as to have changed their character, protest loudly against all such temporizing; and their language in this respect is accompanied by much that seems to

* Χρὴ μέν τοι γε τὸν ἅπαξ παραδεξάμενον τοῦ πτισαντὸς τὸν κόσμον εἶναι ταύτας τὰς γραφὰς πεπεῖσθαι, ὅτι ὅσα περὶ τῆς κτίσεως ἁπαντᾷ τοῖς ζητοῦσι τὸν περὶ αὐτῆς λόγον, ταῦτα καὶ περὶ τῶ γραφῶν.—Philocal. p. 23. Ed. Cant.

bespeak its sincerity.* In the very Apology of Justin whence those extracts are taken on which Dr. Priestley's accusation is founded, the writer is careful to state that in appealing to certain preconceived notions of mankind as in accordance with the leading facts of Christianity, he is far from meaning to rest the claims of that divine system on the strength, or even on the existence, of any

* It is in the following terms that Tertullian speaks of the paramount authority of revelation, and of the evils to be apprehended, and which had actually resulted in his day, from an undue influence of philosophy. "Nobis vero nihil ex nostro arbitrio inducere licet, sed nec eligere quod aliquis de arbitrio suo induxerit. Apostolos Domini habemus auctores, qui nec ipsi quidquam ex suo arbitrio, quod inducerent, elegerunt; sed acceptam à Christo disciplinam fideliter nationibus adsignaverunt.—Ea est materia sapientiæ secularis, temeraria interpres divinæ naturæ et dispositionis. Ipsæ denique hereses à philosophia subornantur. Inde Æones, et formæ nescio quæ, et trinitas hominis apud Valentinum: Platonicus fuerat. Inde Marcionis Deus melior de tranquillitate: à Stoicis venerat. Et ut anima interire dicatur, ab Epicureis observatur. Et ut carnis restitutio negetur, de una omnium philosophorum schola sumitur. Et ubi materia cum Deo æquatur, Zenonis disciplina est: et ubi aliquid de igneo Deo allegatur, Heraclitus intervenit. Eadem materia apud hæreticos et philosophos volutatur, idem retractatus implicantur. Unde malum, et quare? et unde homo, et quomodo? et quod proxime Valentinus proposuit, unde Deus? Scilicet de ethymesi, et ectromate. Miserum Aristotelem! qui illis dialecticam instituit, artificem struendi et destruendi, versipellem in sententiis, coactam in conjecturis, duram in argumentis, operariam contentionum, molestam etiam sibi ipsi, omnia retractantem, ne quid omnino tractaverit. Hinc illæ fabulæ, et genealogiæ interminabiles, et quæstiones infructuosæ, et sermones serpentes velut cancer; à quibus nos Apostolus refrenans, nominatim philosophiam contestatur caveri oportere, scribens ad Colossenses: Videte ne quis vos circumveniat per philosophiam, et inanem seductionem, secundum traditionem hominum, præter providentiam Spiritus Sancti. Fuerat Athenis, et istam sapientiam humanam, affectatricem, et interpolatricem veritatis, de congressibus noverat, ipsam quoque in suas hæreses multipartitam varietate sectarum invicem repugnantium. Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? quid Academiæ et Ecclesiæ? quid hæreticis et Christianis? Nostra institutio de porticu Salomonis est, qui et ipse tradiderat Dominum in simplicitate cordis esse quærendum. Viderint qui Stoïcum, et Platonicum et Dialecticum Christianismum protulerunt. Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Jesum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium. Cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. Hoc enim priùs credimus, non esse quod ultra credere debeamus." —Opera. Præscript. Hereticor. 204, 205.

such affinities. Its great claim he declared to be, in its pre-eminently divine origin, and "in its being the truth, and nothing but the truth."

Justin's theory, moreover, as to the origin of all such resemblances, a theory which is largely and repeatedly expounded by him, must have been far from acceptable to the parties whom he is described as so much concerned to please by his discoursings. Every gleam of truth that had crossed the darkness of the Gentile schools of philosophy, he claims as having emanated from revelation; while not a few of the opinions or usages in the established paganism which he describes as analogous to certain parts of the Christian system, he denounces as the inventions of devils, who by this clumsy attempt to anticipate the advent, and the appearances connected with it, as foretold by the prophets, would fain have counteracted the purpose of the Almighty, by introducing a false gospel, so as to preclude men, by that means, from giving any degree of attention to the true, when the time for its promulgation should arrive.* We need not attempt, in this place, to determine the truth or error of this notion; we appeal to the fact of its being so broached, as evidence that these much-abused Fathers of the Church may have made frequent appeal to affinities between heathenism and Christianity, while nothing was farther from their thoughts than to flatter the heathen by so doing, or to corrupt the religion of the cross that it might be brought into a state of less repugnance to the religion of the empire. The man who could give utterance to a conception as to the origin of the established paganism, so obnoxious as that above stated, who would so do in a

* Justin. Opera, Apolog. II. pp. 81, 89—95. The same theory is frequently broached by Tertullian, and indeed by nearly all the earlier Fathers. Tertul. Opera, Apol. pp. 21, 22, 36, 37. De Præscript. Hæreticor. c. vii. xl. De Spectaculis, c. xxiii. Clement of Alexandria adopted this opinion from Philo Judæus, Lib. II. c. v. 439. Ed. Potterian.

document addressed to the throne, and that at a moment when a *philosophical* persecutor—often the *worst* of persecutors—sat upon it, publishing moveover to the whole empire, what had been thus addressed to its chief, such a man is not to be lightly charged with having descended to play the courtly sycophant, or to become a corrupter of the truth, to gain worldly favour. It is to be remembered, also, that the man so impeached in this instance, is Justin the *Martyr*, a man who when his hour of trial came was not found wanting in the integrity or the courage necessary to entitle him to that distinction.

The substance of these somewhat exculpatory remarks might be extended from Justin to many other writers in ecclesiastical history whose fate it has been to fall under a similar tone of criticism. Indeed there are facts which seem to warrant the conclusion, that the errors of these ancients, were rarely the effect altogether, or in any large degree, of those faithless and worldly intentions which have been so freely imputed to them. Their conclusions may often be such as *we* could not adopt without doing violence to what we deem the most obvious dictates of evidence and reason. But the circumstances of the early Fathers were so widely different from our own, that any reasoning from the one state of things to the other, requires to be conducted with great caution, if it is not to lead us astray, and to injustice.

Not to dwell, however, on this point, it is impossible that a devout mind should be conversant with these writers, when addressing themselves to the defence of Christianity, without deploring that so much more time should have been employed by them in combating the follies and contradictions of philosophers, or in exposing the vices and absurdities of Paganism, than in expounding and vindicating the doctrines of revelation. While professing to confine themselves to the defensive, they are continually deserting that ground, and never seem more in earnest

than when directing the weapons of reason or ridicule against some favourite opinion or custom of their philosophical or pagan adversaries. Judging from the tone in which their conduct as theologians has been described in recent times, we should hardly suppose that the terms in which they express themselves concerning the Gentile philosophy and the Pagan worship, are often terms of such thorough contempt or denunciation, as censurable from their excess, rather than as betraying any temporizing policy. Gibbon complains of their conduct in this view, and of the "superfluous wit" with which they assailed their hard-pressed antagonists. And there certainly were occasions when it would have been well if their disposition to indulge in sarcasm, and to dwell on the ludicrous in the systems of their opponents, had been somewhat more restrained. Nevertheless, men were not wanting, from the earliest age to that of Augustine, who charged the Christian doctors with having borrowed their leading tenets from the philosophy of Plato; but this the Christians of those times indignantly denied, retorting on their adversaries the charge of a previous theft.*

The nature of the subject before us will require, that our future references to the Fathers should be more in the way of condemnation than approval. It is for this reason that we have endeavoured, as a preliminary point, to distinguish between their real faults, and such as have been imputed to them through ignorance or prejudice. They erred often and greatly, as we shall presently see; but the man who insinuates that their attachment to Christian truth was so feeble as to allow of their sacrificing it deliberately and systematically on the altar of a worldly expediency, must be wanting, either in the power, or the disposition, to form a sound judgment on the subject.

Justin Martyr has suffered as much from insinuations

* Augustin. De Doctrin. Lib. II. c. 2. Augustinus Paulino, Ep. 33.

of this sort as any man. It is in the following langu
however, that he speaks, when appealing to Antoninus P
and to his son Verissimus, the philosopher, and Lucius
philosopher, against the wrongs inflicted on the "suffe
multitude" of his brethren. "Reason affirms," he
serves, "that those who are truly pious, and truly p
sophers, are bound to regard the truth alone as preci
and to render it the greatest honour; abandoning opini
however ancient, when shown to be depraved. Nor is
all; sound reason teaches that we should be no par
with men who do unjustly, but that every lover of t
should choose to speak and act in all things accordin
truth, in the face of all possible consequences, ever
death itself. The names by which it is your pleasur
be every where known, are the *pious*, the *philosophical*,
guardians of justice, and the *lovers of learning*. How
these titles are borne consistently, facts shall determ
For we are far from meaning to approach you in the
guage of flattery, or to seek favour by such means.
come to demand that justice—justice the most impartia
and nothing more, may be done: that no judgment
be pronounced upon us in prejudice, from a desire
pleasing superstitious men; nor in blind passion, de
of reason, the mind being long occupied by evil repo
And this we demand, lest in so judging us, you ju
yourselves. For our doctrine teaches us that we su
nothing in *bearing* evil; the only harm that can befall
is in *yielding* to it. It is in your power to destroy, i
not in your power to injure."* It was not often t
language of this just and intrepid cast was addressed
such ears. The sentiments generally expressed by th
venerable apologists on the subject of religious freed
were in fact new to the world. Down to their time it
been a settled maxim among the nations, that a
accepted his religion from the authorities of his coun

* Apology, II. 53, 54.

as he accepted any other matter regarded as pertaining to that authority. The plea of individual conscience against the decree of the magistrate, was no more to be listened to in religious matters, than in secular matters. As such a plea in the latter case, exposed a man to the charge of rebellion and treason, so did it in the former case. Nations differed in their religions, but each nation had its religion, and the people were of it. But the *Christian* stood on ground of his own. In his case, an individual conscience had been evoked, and with him the question was, not what does my nation approve, but what is *truth* or *duty?* He could give to Cæsar the civil obedience which belongs to Cæsar, but he must be left to give to God the religious obedience which belongs to God. Hitherto, in the code of nations, and in the code of the empire also, religious obedience had ever been as a part of civil obedience. Tertullian, however, declares it to be "a matter of right, naturally belonging to every human being, to worship the God in whom he believes; and that it can be no part of one man's religion to coerce the religion of another—since religion, if not received voluntarily, is not received at all."* This was to assert manhood, in the matter of religion, for humanity, and to promulge an idea destined to raise humanity to manhood in a thousand directions beside. But while we are refreshed by the intelligence and philanthropy of such convictions, and admire the leonine courage which avows them, we have to lament that they were too much in advance of the times to find much favour in the schools of the learned, or to be endured in places of power.†

* Ad Scapul. c. 2.

† It is no matter of conjecture what the fate of Origen would have been had he lived even under the last of the Tudors, and dared to express himself to the following effect:—"Volens Celsus invidiam Christianismo conflare, quod fœdera inter se clam ineant Christiani legibus vetita, hoc primum ait alia esse fœdera quæ fiunt palam, alia quæ occulte: illa legibus permitti, hæc legibus prohibita. Nempe vult in eam quam Christiani mutuam vocant Agapen,

II. In adverting to the ancient Philosophy as a source of corruption to Christianity, the manner in which it favoured the introduction of UNSOUND METHODS OF SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION should be first noticed.

Egypt, the country in which the earliest attempt was made to crush thè people who were entrusted with the treasures of revealed religion, was also the place in which this religion, at a later period, was especially corrupted. It was in Egypt particularly, that the interpretation of Scripture in the several senses called allegorical, tropical, and anagogical, were so added to the literal rendering as to become a system.* What we are to understand by the literal and allegorical sense, cannot need explanation. The tropical related to the interpretation of the metaphors of Scripture:—as when the Redeemer speaks of himself as the "vine," and the "door;" and of his body, saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." The anagogical, was what we call the spiritual mode of interpretation, designed to elicit the spiritual meaning contained, or supposed to be contained, in the allusions, events, and institutions of Scripture.

odium excitare, quasi communis periculi causa instituta fuerit, et validior sit omni sacramento. Quoniam igitur jactitat publicam legem, et illam violari dicit Christianorum fœderibus, respondendum est, quemadmodum si quis apud Scythas peregrinus qui nefariis legibus utuntur, nullam inde discedendi occasionem reperiret, cogereturque inter eos vivere, is profecto ut pareat veritatis legi quam illi nefariam putant, jure cum iis qui eadem secum sentirent, fœdera iniret legibus Scytharum vetita: sic apud veritatem judicem illas gentium leges quæ statuarum cultum sanciunt, et inducta deorum multitudine Deum è medio tollunt, leges esse Scythicas, aut si quid est legibus Scythiciis irreligiosius. Non igitur absurdum est fœdera contra leges inire, veritatis defendendæ causa. Sicut enim si qui clam fœdera inter se inirent ut Tyrannum urbem invadentem è medio tollant, illi recte facerent; ita Christiani, diabolo mendacioque apud ipsos tyrannidem exercentibus, merito, etiam perfractis diaboli legibus, contra diabolum ipsum fœdera ineunt, sicque dant operam eorum saluti quibus persuaderi potest, ut hanc veluti Scythicam et tyrannicam legem executiant."—Opera, Contrà Celsus, 319, 320.

* Mosheim. De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum II. sect xxxiii.

Now it is admitted, that the complete explanation of Scripture will require the frequent aid of all these methods. It abounds in figurative language; there is also a peculiar spiritual meaning to be very often attached to it; and when it is remembered that the parables are of the nature of allegories, it must be obvious that the allegorical sense may not be dispensed with. It is not, then, to the kinds of interpretation now enumerated, considered in themselves, that we object, but simply to a particular manner of applying them. Truth may become error by being pushed to extremes, and the soundest canon of criticism will become a treacherous guide if carried to excess.

The extent to which this mode of expounding the Scriptures was carried by Origen, the great luminary among Christian teachers in the third century, has led to its being frequently described as an invention of that writer. But in this respect, as in many others, Origen did nothing more than give the influence of his powerful name to what had already very generally obtained. Nor is it enough to say that Origen's principles of interpretation were in substance those of Justin Martyr, of Clemens Alexandrinus, of Philo Judæus, and of some other writers in the first and second centuries. The sources of this stream, which did so much to poison the fountains of sacred knowledge, are still more remote. Before the age of Philo, both the Pharisees and the Essenes had indulged much in such methods of explaining, or rather obscuring the sacred writings; nor is it easy to conceive how the Sadducees could have maintained their most unscriptural creed, while professing to believe the Scriptures, except by some such means.* Through the Gentile world, especially among the Greeks, the doctrines of religion and philosophy were all so propounded as to be inseparable from allegory and

* Mosheim. De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum II. sect. xxxiv., III. sect. xxviii.

mysticism, if they were to be made at all intelligi What semblance of the reasonable could be given to mythology of Greece without the assistance of allegc or to the imaginative creations of the Orientalist with the help of mysticism?

It may be proper in this place to adduce some illus tions of the manner in which the pagan Platonists v accustomed to avail themselves both of allegory and my cism in their philosophical comments on the pop mythology. Thus one expounder of "the judgmen Paris" observes—"In this fable, which is of the m kind, it is said that Discord, at a banquet of the g threw a golden apple; and that a dispute about it ari among the goddesses, they were sent by Jupiter to judgment of Paris, who, charmed with the beaut Venus, gave her the apple in preference to the rest. this banquet denotes the supermundane powers of gods, and on this account they subsist in conjunc with each other. And the golden apple denotes the w which, on account of its composition from contrary nat is not improperly said to be thrown by Discord, or S Again, however, since different gifts are imparted to world by different gods, they appear to contest with other for the apple. And a soul living according to s (for this is Paris,) not perceiving other powers in universe, says, that the beauty of Venus alone is the tended apple."* Another in this class of writers obse "Geographers assert that the islands of the blessec about the ocean, and that souls depart thither which lived well. This however is absurd, for souls would have a stormy life. What then shall we say? The i tion is this. Philosophers assimilate the life of me the sea, because it is turbulent, prolific, bitter, and la ous. But as islands are raised above the sea, they

* See the Metamorphosis of Apuleius, by Taylor, 93.

polity which transcends the present life, the islands he blessed, and these are the same as the Elysian s. On this account also, Hercules accomplished last labour in the Hesperian regions, signifying by , that having vanquished a dark and terrestrial life, fterwards lived in day, that is, in truth and light."* these passages it must suffice to remark, that while wisest of the Greeks claimed this latitude of inter- ation on such subjects, the Orientalists assumed even reater license; and it must be evident that the same rty being ceded in the exposition of Scripture, there d be no doctrine which the Bible might not be made teach.

circumstance which conduced much to the form and valence of the principles now under consideration, was

* Ibid. 265; from Olympiodorus in MSS. Schol. in Gorgiam Platonis. he work," says Bishop Marsh, "in which this species of allegorical inter- tation was first employed was the Iliad of Homer: and a collection of gorical expositions is still extant, which has been published under the *Heraclidis Allegoriæ Homericæ*. It is true that the actions ascribed to the oes of the Iliad cannot be regarded as *real* history; that they cannot be rded as a journal of events which actually happened before the walls of y. But the author certainly meant that they should assume the *character* real events. For unless the descendants of those heroes could have *posed*, at least, that they were reading the actions of their ancestors, the d would never have become a *national poem*. There was nothing, there- e, in the *character* of these actions at all resembling *allegorical* representation, representation which not only *professes* to be a picture of the imagination, t a picture introduced merely for the sake of *another* picture that *resembles* it. or were the actions ascribed even to the *deities* of the Iliad, any other than ch as accorded with the superstition of the age, and to the *original* readers ceeded not the bounds of *credibility*. But when the savage manners of the cient heroes became offensive to the polished Greeks of later ages, and the ythology of Homer became disgusting to those who had been educated in he schools of Aristotle and Plato, the commentators on Homer had recourse o the expedient of *allegorical* interpretation. Unable to defend him by a *teral* exposition, yet unwilling to abandon a national author, whom the Greeks ad ever holden in the highest veneration, his philosophic interpreters drew ne veil of allegory over the actions of the Iliad, and represented them, thus isguised, as the depositories of sublime and mysterious truths."—Lectures n the Criticism and Interpretation of the Bible, 358, 359.

the progress of the Eclectic spirit. The great obj
Eclecticism was to bring about a union of thing
scribed as having a natural relation to each othe
which were, in fact, of the most heterogeneous de
tion; and that this object might be secured, some
means of transmutation as this theory of interpre
presented was strictly necessary. By this process
discordant notes of wisdom and folly, of truth and
hood, were so modulated and blended together, as to
their separate and proper expression. Such was the
tic power of this instrument, that it could engraft o
clude at pleasure, and educe the appearance of order
the wildest confusion.*

Great was the change which passed on Christi
and on the systems with which it was brought into
tact, in consequence of these supposed affinities bet
them. Many terms in the Platonic philosophy wer
placed by others borrowed from Christianity; and
of the tenets of Platonism were so explained and
fied as to be brought into apparent harmony with
gospel. But from the same cause, the doctrines of
lation would be exposed to the same treatment, a
similar impression was in fact made both upon thei
guage and their substance. The doctrine of the T
was attempted to be explained on the principle o
three *hypostaces*, or natures, in the Deity, as taugh
Plato. The predictions of Scripture with regard t
destruction of the world by fire, and the resurrecti
the body, were so allegorized as merely to denote
philosophical purification of the moral system, in ac
ance with what had been long taught on that subje
the schools of Greece. And, on the same principle
doctrine of Scripture in reference to the new birth
explained as meaning little more than an ascenden

* Clemens Alexandrinus defines this system, as embracing the whol
of knowledge, rendered subservient to truth.—Stromatum, Lib. I. 291.

rational over the sensual, the government of a de-
ed body by an enlightened soul,—a regenerating
ıge which the wisest among the Gentiles had always
essed themselves to be earnestly coveting.* In this
ner, the distinguishing truths of Christianity were *cor-*
ɔd by the ancient philosophy, not *borrowed* from it—
stinction of some significance, and which admits of
le proof.

'e have seen that the early Fathers were not disposed
ɔnfess any obligation to the schools of philosophy in
ect to the slightest portion of their creed; and that,
he contrary, they were wont to regard every thing true
he notions of philosophers, as borrowed, directly or
rectly, from the writings of Moses and the prophets.
as the consequence of this doctrine, it became expe-
t that every thing deemed reasonable in the systems
ıgan wisdom, should be found, by some means, in the
e; and that these discoveries might be made, the most
ıthorized modes of explaining the records of inspira-
became indispensable. But we must pass from the
ces of this evil, to notice a few instances illustrating
kind of injury which its prevalence served to inflict on
istianity.

has been stated that the Christian Fathers Pantænus
Clement, were successively presidents in the Christian
ɔchetical School of Alexandria. In that seminary the
ːh of Christian families were taught the lessons of re-
ɔn and philosophy; and its teachers, by moulding the
acter of the more intellectual of their pupils to their
sure, gave to the Christianity of the third century
h of that impure complexion by which it was distin-
hed. Not a single production from the prolific pen of
ːænus is now extant. We learn, however, from Cle-
t, that one of his favourite laws of criticism on the

* Clemens. Stromat. Lib. V. 211, 647, 710, et alibi.

Scriptures was, to confound the distinction betwee
past and future tenses. By this means the langua
the prophets, and even the most simple statements o
torical fact, were made susceptible of almost any ap
tion that fancy might suggest, or the exigencies of a t
might require. Passages recording what the Alm
had done, became, as occasion demanded, so many
dictions as to what he meant to do. Let only this ru
admitted, in the sense insisted on by Pantænus, and
is no portion of the sacred volume so obvious in its n
ing as to be secure.

Clement was the disciple, as well as the successc
Pantænus, and followed the example of his master ε
interpreter of the inspired writings. He wrote com
taries on nearly all the books of Scripture, but por
only of his works have descended to us. From
remains we learn, that one of Clement's favourite ma
was, that the study of philosophy should not only go
with the study of divinity, but even precede it. Ap
are made to Scripture itself in support of this opinion.
the Scripture history concerning Sarah and Agar, Cle
finds every thing necessary to his purpose. In Abra
he saw the representative of a divinely-taught believ
the gospel; in Sarah, the emblem of Christian wisdo
divinity; and in Agar, the personification of human wis
or philosophy. Abraham lived long in a wedded
with Sarah, but remained childless,—a circumstance w
was meant to teach, that the mind, to become fruitful,
not be conversant with Christian wisdom, or divinity, a
The history which states that Abraham afterwards
Agar to himself, with the consent of Sarah, is explain
teaching that men may study pagan philosophy, with
full consent of Christian theology. The birth of Isaa
Sarah, was subsequent to the birth of Ishmael by
and this fact is said to show that the men who give
attention to profane, as well as sacred studies, are

capable of becoming spiritual fathers in the church, their efforts as philosophers being necessary to their success as divines.* On such a sample of Biblical interpretation we need not say anything. That a considerable attention to philosophy might be highly useful to the student of theology, no intelligent man could dispute; but the doctrine which seemed to set forth the latter as necessarily dependent on the former for its efficiency, was at once false and pernicious. Nor could anything be more perilous than the practice which exposed the youthful mind to the danger of imbibing the strongest prejudice in favour of the speculations of men, before bringing it to the business of inquiry concerning the truth which has come to us from God.

It was a leading doctrine of Platonism that the world partakes of a twofold nature,—the visible and the invisible, —in other words, that it consists of things which are ascertained by the senses, and of things which are seen only by the intellect. Clement approved this doctrine, and insisted, as a matter of course, that it had been taken from the Scriptures. Nor was he at a loss in fixing on the precise source of the plagiarism. The doctrine of Plato with regard to the intellectual world, as distinguished from the sensuous—a speculation always far enough removed from the apprehension of the vulgar—he discovered in the words of the sacred historian when describing the earth as without form, and void (or invisible). The sensible world, with which alone the perceptions of men in general are conversant, was supposed to have been called into existence when God said—"Let there be light."†

It was, moreover, a doctrine of Clement, that the laws of Moses are all susceptible of four kinds of interpretation.

* Mosheim, De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum II. sect. xxxiii. Stromatum, Lib. I. 333. Clemens had found many instances of this kind of interpretation, and quite to this extent of extravagance, in the Epistle of Barnabas—a work which he attributed to the Barnabas mentioned in Scripture. Theophilus of Antioch supplied him with further examples.

† Stromat. Lib. V. 702.

Besides the *literal* meaning, mention is made of the *spiritu* the *practical*, and the *prophetic*. In every Mosaic institu or observance, the studious may discover all these signi cations. The spiritual sense he frequently carried to t excess of Cabalistic mysticism. But to do so was n difficult. It was in the search after ethical principles underlieing all knowledge; and in the attempt to sh that even under the precepts of the decalogue, the spirit mind might trace the intimations of prophecy, that t power of invention was required to do its utmost. Th is, no doubt, a spiritual, or an evangelical, as well a literal signification that should be attached, under certa restrictions, to the Mosaic ritual. It will be admitte also, that the positive institutions of the Hebrew lawgi have their relation—in the manner of all such institutes to moral obligation; and that inasmuch as the Leviti observances generally were "shadows of good things come," there is a prophetic sense involved in them. I the manner in which these principles of interpretati were applied by Clement, exposed the general teaching Scripture to all kinds of misconstruction.

As an expositor of Scripture, Justin Martyr was a m of sobriety and accuracy, if compared with Clement Alexandria. Instances of fanciful interpretation are n indeed unfrequent in the writings of this Father, but th occur as exceptions, not as the rule.

It would be well if we could so speak of Origen. I the works of this renowned author, amidst the mu proofs they afford of his extraordinary learning and geni of his almost incredible industry, and, we may add, of ardent religious feeling, became the depository of alm every possible extravagance, partly as the consequence his views concerning the relation of philosophy to th logy, and partly from the principles of interpretat applied by him to the sacred writings. It was his frequ charge against the philosophers of his time, that t

attempted to conceal the absurdities of the established religion under the veil of allegory and mysticism; and it was with justice that he was often censured, in his turn, as having resorted to the same means in his defence of the gospel.*

There are two motives by which Origen appears to have been especially influenced in adopting this course. In the first place, it promised him assistance in meeting certain objections urged by unbelievers—and it was not usual in that age to suppose that there could be anything, even in theology, which must be from its own nature inexplicable, and open as such, from necessity, to the cavils of the sceptic. In the next place, such a manner of proceeding was strictly necessary, if this memorable champion of the Scriptures was to find in them certain favourite notions which he had adopted from the prevailing systems of philosophy.

So much was Origen influenced by these, and other considerations, that he sometimes spoke of the literal rendering of many parts of Scripture as being not only unreasonable, but of pernicious tendency—adding, "that though in others there were, indeed, certain notions conveyed under the outward terms, according to their literal force and import, yet it was not in these that the true meaning of the sacred writers was to be sought, but in a mysterious and hidden sense, arising from the nature of the things themselves. This hidden

* He touches on this point with some warmth more than once in his answer to Celsus. "Postea criminatur Moysis libros, et culpat eos qui tropologiis, et allegoriis illos interpretantur. Hic merito quis roget egregium illum hominem et suum librum veri sermonis titulo ornantem. Quid, o bone! deos, qui in tales inciderunt casus quales sapientes tui poëtæ ac philosophi describunt, qui detestabilibus spurcitiis se fœdaverunt, qui cum suis parentibus bello gesserunt, qui eorum virilia amputaverunt, glorialis talia memorari ausos esse, perpetrasse, pertulisse: à Moyse autem deceptos et in errorem inductos putas qui se ejus legibus subdidere, quamvis ille nec de Deo, nec de Angelis similia scripserit, immo multo leviora dixerit de hominibus? Nemo enim in illius libris est, qui tale quid ausus sit, quale Saturnus contra cœlum, aut Jupiter contra patrem. Non est apud illum pater hominumque Deûmque, qui cum propria filia concubuerit."—Opera, I. 336.

sense he endeavours to investigate throughout his commentaries, neglecting and despising, for the most part, the outward letter; and in this devious path he displays the most ingenious flights of fancy, though always at the expense of truth, whose divine simplicity is scarcely discernible through the cobweb veil of allegory. Nor did the inventions of Origen end here. He divided this hidden sense, which he pursued with so much eagerness, into moral, and mystical—or spiritual. The moral sense of Scripture displays those doctrines that relate to the inward state of the soul, and the conduct of life. The mystical, or spiritual sense represents the nature, the laws, and the history of the spiritual or mystical world. We are not yet at the end of this labyrinth, for he subdivided the mystical world of his own creation into two distinct regions, the one of which he called the superior, *i. e.* heaven, and the other the inferior, by which he meant the church. This led to another division of the mystical sense, adapted to the inferior world, and a celestial or anagogetical sense, adapted to the superior region."*

In the work of Origen against Celsus these unhappy eccentricities are of less frequent occurrence than in his commentaries, but even there examples of this nature are not wanting. Thus in the tables of stone, written upon as with the finger of God, Origen could see the engraving of the divine law on the tablet of natural conscience. In the breaking of those tablets, the occasion of which was the worship of the golden calf, he saw the erasure of the law from the conscience by the entrance of sin. And in the re-writing of the law, men were to learn that the effects of their apostacy were to be removed by the intervention of the gospel.†

Subsequently, it is laid down as a principle, that all the leading circumstances or events mentioned in Scripture have in them a concealed meaning, which the enlightened

* Mosheim, Hist. I. 277, 278. † Opera, I. 323.

reader, with due effort, may discover. And having spoken of the metaphorical use made in the New Testament of the crucifixion and death of Christ, those events being adverted to as setting forth in figure the nature of the Christian life, it is added, "but his burial, his tomb, and the person who buried him, all are points of much importance, on which I mean to prepare a distinct treatise. At present I shall only mention the linen cloths in which it was wisely ordained by Providence that the spotless Jesus should be enveloped; and also the new sepulchre, hewn out of the rock, wherein, as John records, never man lay. It may be well to inquire whether the account of the sepulchre, as given by three Evangelists, does not present some convincing evidence in regard to divine truth, and whether such as apply themselves to the obscure and hidden sense of Scripture should not search for some concealed doctrine in the fact that Jesus was laid in a *new* sepulchre, a sepulchre, as two of the Evangelists affirm, in which no man had lain. For it behoved that one whose end appeared so fatal and extraordinary, that he gave forth signs of life after death, by the effusion of water and blood from his wounded side, should partake of an unusual burial. Inasmuch as his birth was not in the ordinary course of nature, but by a virgin mother, it was on this account fitting that his interment should be accompanied by circumstances bespeaking an untainted purity, which circumstances we see in his being laid in a new sepulchre, and in one not composed of many stones placed together by art, but hewn in an entire rock. But concerning the literal narrative in these places, and that higher signification that should be attached to the things thus said to have happened, and of which they are the figures, it would be easy for those who have applied themselves to such studies to discourse more sublimely and divinely." What Origen *could* find in such a subject is sufficiently indicated in what he has here said upon it,

and may be conjectured but too readily from other part of his writings.*

Scripture history is represented by the same writer a always containing both a moral and a mystical sense Thus the coming of the Syro-Phœnician woman to th Redeemer, imploring the recovery of her daughter, i explained by saying, that every one who is subject to sin dwells, like that woman, on the borders of Tyre an Sidon; and that to turn from a vicious to a virtuous life is to migrate, as she did, from the country of Tyre an Sidon, into regions nearer to God. The fact also that th Saviour met the woman when coming on this errand, i described as showing his willingness to meet every return ing sinner.† Again: Moses relates that after the death o Joseph, the children of Israel were much increased; an this circumstance is regarded as teaching, that the mortifi cation and death of sin in the believer, shall be followed b a large increase of his moral and spiritual graces!‡

Nor was it enough that the facts of Scripture histor should be thus made to speak whatever had chanced t commend itself to the imagination or the humour of th commentator; a large portion of those facts, both in th Old Testament and the New, were described as mere in ventions. Some were so regarded on the pretence tha they were descriptive of what could not by possibility hav happened; others as consisting of pure fiction; the desig of the Holy Spirit in both, being to convey a hidde meaning, and by this means to imbue the minds of me with a peculiar knowledge of the mysteries of their re demption. As the narrative portions of Scripture wer conceived, according to some *à priori* standard, to b worthy of God or otherwise, to be of a useful or injurio tendency, so were they to relate to the possible or th impossible—to be classed, if I may so speak, with fact o fiction. Indeed, to such an extent did Origen adopt th

* Opera, I. 438, 439. † Opera, III. 503. ‡ Opera, II. 131.

Platonic doctrine of *ideas*, which so strongly pervades the philosophical speculations of his time, that he viewed all the objects and occurrences of the material world mentioned in the Scripture, as the archetype of an invisible order of things; the natural world being only a more perceptible adumbration of a spiritual one, to which it holds a necessary relation, and from which it derives existence.*

The celebrity of Origen would be sure to produce a multitude of imitators as regards this manner of teaching; and it was inevitable that many of these, not possessing the discrimination of their master, small as that may sometimes appear to have been, would fall into even greater extravagance. The student possessing any considerable acquaintance with the works of Origen, and with those of the Greek and Latin Fathers who succeeded him, must have often felt surprised on seeing the extent to which the later of this class of writers became copyists

* See the preface to the Benedictine edition of Origen's Works, and Mosheim's De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum Tertium, sect. 28. In one of the most vicious of these excesses, denying the literal, or real truth, of much in the narrative portions of Scripture, Origen had his precursor in Philo, who allowed himself to be hurried thus far from the right way in opposing such as attached too literal a meaning to the language of accommodation employed by the inspired writers. Thus the history of Paradise became a fable with one party, as the consequence of its having been pushed to the extremes of a wretched literalism by another. "Philo suggests the inquiry: How can Moses attribute to God, who is far above all passion and change, anger, zeal, and other similar human things? and he answers: Moses has here, like a wise lawgiver, let himself down so as to meet the wants of rude sense-led men, incapable of the contemplation of pure truth, who must at first be restrained from evil by the fear of punishment. Let all such persons, therefore," says he, "learn those *false* things, by which they may be profited, if they are unable to be amended by truth; for the most approved physicians dare not tell the truth to those who are dangerously ill, because they know that this will depress them, and the disease will gain strength." (Deum Immutab. pp. 302, 303. Neander, Hist. I. 49.) Such in effect is the frequent language of Origen. (Opera, I. 336.) But, as Neander justly remarks, "Philo here did not remember, that the fear of punishment can at most only restrain the open outbreak of vice; he did not consider that the Old Testament notion of God's anger contains a great truth, represented in human language, the truth of the reality of sin and guilt."—Ibid.

from the earlier. Not that the doctrine of Origen was generally approved. The attachment of his disciples to his principles was most ardent, but so formidable was the opposition made to them, either by the envy, or by the more scriptural piety of his opponents, that during several centuries the church continued to be agitated by disputes on the subject of Origenism.

While men who were regarded as in the main orthodox, passed into extremes of this description in the interpretation of Scripture, it will be supposed that the parties who were disowned as heretics must have been at a much greater remove from a due reverence for the sacred writings, and from the guidance of a sound judgment in the exposition of them. And, in fact, by this latter class, the documents included in the canon of Scripture were received, rejected, or mutilated at pleasure, the most spurious productions being frequently substituted in their room. It was their manner to describe the apostles as forbearing to communicate many things which they knew, except under the veil of allegory; and as being ignorant of many things, the discovery of which, in the use of proper means, would be no difficult achievement to men placed in more favourable circumstances. On these points the early heretics were generally agreed; and they accordingly applied themselves to finish what the inspired writers were said to have left incomplete, and especially to elucidate a supposed hidden meaning in the gospels and epistles. In prosecuting these efforts, their methods of explaining the Scriptures became flexible in all the forms and degrees demanded by the exigencies of their theories. Many rejected the whole of the Old Testament; and the parts of the New that were retained, were often so glossed or explained as to favour the most unscriptural and irrational speculations.*

* Of the above statements we have ample proof and illustration, as every student of ecclesiastical history must know, in the great work of Irenæus, Adversus Hæreses; and in the "Prescriptions" of Tertullian.

all possible error, must be at once manifest. But in illustration of this point it may be well to glance at some of the more remarkable among the delusions which have come into existence under such influence, or may be said to have been greatly dependent upon it for protection.

Some striking examples of this description have already claimed our attention, but there are others which should receive a passing notice. It was while avowing himself a Christian, that Clement of Alexandria maintained that the present world should be viewed as a sort of recomposition from the materials of preceding worlds; that the planets are animated bodies; that matter is eternal; and that our souls have come into our bodies by transmigration. His account of the birth of Eve, was not only different from what is given in Scripture, but such as not to bear repeating. He regarded the angels as having been ensnared to impurity by the beauty of women; and, with other strange doctrines, taught an unintelligible dogma, which distinguished between a Word that became incarnate, and a superior Word which has remained invisible, and which is alone the Word of God.* It is proper to add, that Clement lived to modify some of these opinions, and that others no less fanciful and unscriptural were abandoned by him before his decease. But how must he have explained the sacred writings to have given them ever the semblance of an agreement with such notions?

In the scheme of Origen, there were many speculations of this unauthorized description, even to the end of his days. He sometimes spoke of the Redeemer so as to seem to favour the Arian hypothesis. There are, however, innumerable passages in which his language on this point is strictly orthodox, and these oblige us to conclude that his less accurate expressions were an effect of the great evil of his system and his times, which disposed the

* Tillemont, Mémoires, III. 185—196, 650—654. Dupin, I. 62—66.

inquirer to attempt to distinguish and define on matters of religion in a degree not consistent with the limited capacities of the human mind. It is certain, however, that he viewed the souls of men as passing into their present connexion with the body from some pre-existing state—their condition in the present life being the result of their moral history in the life by which it had been preceded. He also speaks of the spirits of men as existing from eternity. Angels he described as being in some degree corporeal, the bodies of the fallen among them partaking of a near approach to visible substance. The death of the Saviour, which, in some mystic sense, he understood to have taken place in other worlds beside our own, he regards as having exerted a benign influence over the condition of all rational natures. Its ultimate effect, he affirmed, would be a universal restoration—even the fallen angels being elevated to the possession of their long-lost glory and happiness. The doctrine of original sin he can hardly be said to have embraced under any view of it, and his whole system was deeply imbued with Pelagianism. He was a believer, moreover, in a kind of purgatory—in a state of contrite suffering as awaiting the disembodied spirits even of good men, and which he explained as being that fire through which all such spirits must pass before ascending to the celestial regions. During a season, they might be doomed to rove about the earth, but, becoming at length pure, they will rise to a state of intimate union with the Divine Nature, and thus attain the highest state of felicity. But no creature can be so elevated as to be secure from falling—from falling even to the lowest hell; and, in the great and ceaseless revolution of all spiritual and of all material things, the most fallen may some day ascend to the place of the most ennobled.* Again we may ask, what violence must

* Opera, Præfatio. Dupin, I. 107—116. Tillemont, Mémoires, III. 551—595.

not have been done to the language of the Word of God before men professing to receive it as such could have been found, not only retaining opinions like these, but zealous in the avowal of them? For it must be remembered, that the great objection to most of these fancies, is not simply that they are unauthorized by revelation, but that they directly contravene it, and that in respect to some of the most important matters determined by its authority.

We have dwelt the longer on this branch of our inquiry, not only from its great general importance, but from the fact that the corruptions of Christianity which did not *originate* in the false theories we have mentioned, were all greatly *strengthened* by them. The Fathers have not been without imitators in their various methods of scripture interpretation, even in our own time. Similar theories, pushed to the same foolish extent, have led to errors hardly less extravagant. It is our happiness to live at a time when the vicious methods of expounding holy writ to which reference has been made, find less tolerance than in any preceding age of the church. But in this department we have much to unlearn, and much to learn. Never were the means of sound biblical interpretation so ample, and never were they upon the whole so well applied. Instances, however, still occur, in which ignorance usurps the place of knowledge; and the imagination and the passions encroach on the province of reason. Reason itself, too, proud in its imagined sufficiency, and wedded to a poor literalism, is often found to be at issue with the spirit of the book which it essays to interpret. There is an intoxication which springs from a consciousness of high natural capability and culture, which is as little favourable to the discovery of truth as is the feeling of the man who regards himself as the subject of a special divine illumination. It is by availing himself diligently and devoutly, both of the natural, and of the supernatural,

that the wise man arrives at his object. Men are enjoined to seek for truth as for hid treasure, and are at the same time assured, that if they find the object of their search, it is because the gracious Being who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone into their heart.*

Other instances in which the spirit of the Gentile philosophy proved injurious to the interests of Christianity, will now require our attention, But on these our observations must be more limited.

III. One very early effect of this philosophy on Christianity was to connect it, in an injurious degree, with a POLEMICAL SPIRIT. In the present state of human nature, opinions are rarely propagated or maintained without the aid of controversy. Circumstances which give rise to controversy in other matters, should not only be expected to have an influence, but an influence peculiarly powerful on the subject of religion. From the repugnance of certain leading doctrines of revelation, and, in fact, of its very spirit, to not a few of the preconceptions and tendencies now common with mankind, the Christian will often find it incumbent upon him to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and Christian ministers will need still to regard themselves as "set for the defence of the gospel."

But while to contend for the truth is an imperative duty, the love of controversy for its own sake is a state of mind condemned alike by the letter and genius of the gospel. It is not possible, however, that we should have attended to the history of the ancient philosophical sects without perceiving, that the instances are rare indeed in which we can suppose the love of truth, and not a passion for the kind of distinction which is obtained by skilful disputation, to have been the motive to antagonism. The philosophical, in every community, were a class separate from the multitude, and far above them, each

* John v. 39. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

man being fully aware that his proficiency as a disputant would be to him as a sort of intellectual knighthood, a kind of patent of nobility. When Christianity began to spread through the empire, it was regarded by such men in the light of a new opponent, whose overthrow was to afford them some new claim to celebrity.

Thus the first preachers of the gospel, and the earliest ecclesiastical writers, were compelled to appear, almost continually, in the character of combatants. This necessity resulted in part from the nature of their vocation as the opponents of established error, but was much augmented by the circumstance now mentioned. And it must be added, that the natural effect of being so much engaged in controversy, was to imbibe more or less of the undesirable state of mind which the habit of controversy ever tends to produce.

Nor must we hesitate to confess that many of the early defenders of Christianity were by no means proof against the dangers to which they were thus exposed. While directing their strength against one error, they often passed, by the force of impulse, into others of an opposite description:—in the manner, for example, of the extreme class of Epicureans, who found no means of escape from superstition, except by rushing into atheism. The practice, not yet extinct, of classing opponents differing only in some slight shades from orthodoxy, with the most flagrant heretics, became but too prevalent. In this manner, Christian truth, and Christian temper, were too frequently sacrificed. Thus it was not enough to denounce the licentiousness of the world, but monkish fanaticism must be fostered in the church; and in the same ill-regulated spirit, it was not enough that Arianism should be proscribed, its followers must be numbered in the edicts of the first Christian emperor with the disciples of Porphyry. Not to believe everything which the majority had agreed to designate as Christian, was to believe in

nothing Christian, much as we hear men described in our own day as Rationalists or Neologians, as the consequence of diverging, in the smallest degree, from some conventional standard of opinion.

Another injurious effect from this cause, consisted in that obstinate attachment to particular tenets which is commonly produced by the habit of passionate discussion in support of them. Every battle fought in the logical arena, was a new pledge of devotedness to preconceived opinions, however absurd; and every new movement of the passions, which in such encounters were sure to be strongly excited, was as a new force given to the ascendancy of feeling over the reason.

The want of delicacy, ingenuousness, and even of common truthfulness and honesty, so frequently observable in the controversies of our own day, is sufficiently appalling; but in this respect the moderns are entitled to the praise of moderation and virtue if compared with these ancients. With our conceptions of a philosopher, we associate calmness, and dignified deliberation; and may well be surprised to learn that the discussions of such men were exercises in which they gave vent to the most vulgar slander and abuse, clothed for the most part in the language of educated men, but not at all less calumnious on that account, and uttered with a violence hardly distinguishable from that of a Python, except that it lasted much longer. Such, however, was the fact. There was nothing in the refinement of either Athens or Rome to secure its public assemblies against the frequent exhibition of such scenes. The art of reviling, as with the force of a torrent, and without any nice regard to the true or the probable, was one of the most essential requisites in a popular orator. The characters of Piso and Mark Anthony, as given by Cicero, are illustrations of this licensed species of abuse, and may enable any man to judge of its animus when resorted to by speakers who

were less restrained by the pride of position, or by ı
delicacy.

Orators and philosophers, are noticed thus indisc
nately, because our remarks on the temper of an
oratory apply equally to that of the senate, the fc
and the schools. Lucian paints the disputing]
sophers of his day as wiping the perspiration from
brow with a bent finger, while uttering their vocifera
and as separating after having done little more than
each other to the utmost—that man being generall
garded as the victor, who had exceeded the most i
boldness and loudness of his assertions.

The social influences which contributed to orig
and to perpetuate this unseemly custom, we need n
tempt to investigate. But its prevalence should pr
us, in some measure, for that occasional asperity i
polemical writings of the Fathers, which, in more r
times, has often exposed them to so much cen
There was nothing, indeed, in the prevalence of
manners, to justify men who called themselves Chris
in conforming to them; but their conduct in this
ticular would have been censured less frequently, and
severely, had it always been viewed, as it ought to
been, in connexion with what was common in the
and spirit of their times.

Another circumstance, contributing in some me
to account for this fault, and which should be admitt
some extenuation of it, is found in the early educati
not a few among the men whose names are most conspi
in ecclesiastical history. Many of them had been or
and teachers of rhetoric, by profession, and had grown
familiarity with the debates of the schools, and the
of the bar. Such were Tertullian, Cyprian, Min
Felix, Lactantius, Arnobius, Victorinus, and Augu
not to mention others. The passions of Tertullian
times led him to indulge in a vehemence of abuse

no circumstances could warrant; but which, if we except the diatribes of Jerome, is of rare occurrence in any other early Christian writer. Others, indeed, there are, who have dealt as largely in misrepresentation; but their statements were the effects of credulity, more than of anything like wilful dishonesty; and believing what they did of their opponents, their language is not often more condemnatory than the case required. This remark may be applied to Irenæus, and still more to Epiphanius. The last-mentioned writer lived in the fourth century, and his great work "Against Heresies" became the depository of all preceding calumnies against the persons and the parties whom the church had so described.

An almost ludicrous illustration of the remark just made on Tertullian, occurs in the commencement of his work against Marcion. This person was a Gnostic, and a great corruptor of Christianity. Nevertheless, Marcion was a man of learning, and the teacher of opinions and maxims sufficiently pure to have brought upon his followers the reproach of being Christians. That the reader might be prejudiced as much as possible against the heresy of Marcion, Tertullian indulges in the most elaborate abuse of the native country of that heresiarch. The neighbourhood of the *Pontus Euxinus*, is described as most inhospitable; its inhabitants, as roaming about in moveable cabins, the sexes as indulging in the most promiscuous intercourse, and both as accustomed to wield the battle-axe in war, and to feast on human flesh. The very elements are made to partake of a strange and ominous character. There are no winds except from the north. No seasons that do not belong to winter. The rivers consist of ice, the mountains of snow, and the heavens are blackness. The cold and the lifeless are every where. If there be anything warm, anything living, it is sure to be a something which lives only to destroy. But the greatest reproach of Pontus is, that it should have given birth

to Marcion—"more ferocious than a Scythian, more i settled than the homeless savage, more inhuman th the Massagetæ, more daring than the Amazon, mo gloomy than the clouds, more cold than winter, mo brittle than ice, more deceptive than the Danube, mo fitted to inflict sudden destruction than Caucasus."*

We need not say, that the state of mind which this la guage indicates, is far removed from the spirit of Chr tianity. Such outbreaks of passion, bespeak a kind intoxication; and it were as reasonable to expect that thoroughly inebriated man should be competent to t more difficult transactions of life, as that minds liable such hurricanes of wrath should escape those snares matters of opinion with which all mortals are beset. N should it be forgotten, that the men who, from this don nance of passion, are peculiarly exposed to error, are ju the men who are impelled to *act*, and with their characte istic energy, as the propagators of the tenets which th may have chanced to adopt. It is the temptation, mo over, of such men, to judge themselves religious accor ing to the warmth of their indignation against the re or supposed irreligion of others—a course of proceedi which is as pleasant as it is deceptive.

Another vice which marked the controversies of t period now under review, consisted in the practice of i puting to opponents, as matters of formal opinion, eve consequence presumed to be deducible from their ackno ledged doctrine. This artifice, indeed, has never ceas to be attendant on discussion, but it deserves special noti in this place on account of its influence on the subseque state of Christianity. It has contributed more than other causes to make the real doctrine of the ancient he tics a matter of uncertainty. It served especially to troduce those metaphysical attempts to define, expla

* Opera, 365, 366.

l guard religious dogmas, whence creeds have their gin, and whence the schoolmen of a later age derived e weapons of their warfare. With the schoolmen, in- ed, it became a leading maxim, that when a statement true, all its alleged consequences must be true; and, on e other hand, that the falsehood of a proposition must volve the falsehood of whatever inference may appear as educible from it. Maxims and consequences, proposi- ons and inferences, were thus made to go together. hat a proposition which necessitates error must itself be rroneous, may be admitted; but to affirm that a doctrine o does, we must be sure that it is a doctrine we may ully comprehend, and that we have comprehended it. 'But the great mischief of adopting this rule in theology," says a learned writer, "appears in the fact, that no purely scriptural truth can be maintained consistently with its admission. The theologian who is influenced by it, will be ever solicitous against exposing his doctrine to the censure of the captious objector. What a temptation, then, is here to the minute adjustment of doctrines to the cavils of the theorist! The painful pursuit of the dog- matist will be to attain that precise form of expression, which shall obviate, as far as possible, every objection that may be raised from the existing state of knowledge in the different departments of science. He must be prepared to show, that this or that notion is implied or excluded in his doctrine, as the case may require. Nor is this all. He must be further able to *demonstrate*, that his collection of doctrines coheres as a system; that no assertion is made on one head that may not be strictly reconciled with an- other, and with *every* other. Here, again, then, his mind must be kept intent on a process very different from that of the mere follower of revelation. He must be engaged n giving a theoretic perfection to his enunciations of the acred truth, in regulating the terms of one proposition, o as to accord with the terms of another; and that the

whole system may appear compacted of harmonious parts. Such a theology is inevitably driven to *abstractions*—to the subtle inventions of the mind itself—in its statements of Scripture truth. The simple facts of revelation must by their nature be open to objections, and, it may be said, to *unanswerable* objections; because these facts belong to an order of things, of which we do not directly know the general laws. The more indeed we approximate to a knowledge of these general laws, the more will such objections disappear. But as we never can arrive, in this state of being, at a proper knowledge of them, numerous anomalies, the evidences in truth of our real ignorance of the subject, must always exist. For what is the explanation of an objection, but a demonstration, that an apparent anomaly resolves itself into some general fact *better* known? It is only where the mind has exactly framed to itself the ideas comprised in any given doctrine, or expression of doctrine, that it can demonstrate the inconsequence of all objections whatever. Objections may be equally futile against the bare revealed facts, but they cannot be decisively *proved* to be so, since the facts are not founded on any precise estimate of ideas involved in them; and in regard to these, therefore, objections may be suffered to stand, without any detraction from our theology. The case, on the other hand, of a metaphysical theology, imperatively demands their solution. Is it, then, for a moment to be supposed, that the simplicity of the faith can be held where such a principle of theology is recognized? Is it not evident rather that the faith as it is in Christ must be corrupted? The conclusion of human reason will naturally be intruded on the sacred truth. The fact will be accommodated to the theory; and exactness of theological definition will usurp the place of the plain dictates of the Holy Spirit."*

Nor is it possible to say where the progressive creed

* Hampden's Bampton Lectures, p. 365—367.

which these circumstances must produce will end. As knowledge shall increase, and as the forms of error shall change, there will be new matters to include, and new matters to provide against, in every statement purporting to be an exhibition of the Christian doctrine. Thus, as Augustine remarks, the doctrine of the Trinity owed its ultimate, or scholastic form, to the controversy with Arius; the doctrine of Repentance, its more perfect development to the disputes with the Novatians. The doctrine of Baptism became better understood from the contention with rebaptizers; and the cardinal article of Church Unity, assumed its proper form when the fact of secessions began to disturb the conscience of the weak.*

From all these causes it followed, as intimated in the language of Augustine himself, that certain scholastic decisions in regard to the laws and truths of Christianity, put forth by synods and councils, became the one authority, in place of the Scriptures, with the great Christian community. To decide on such questions from the Scriptures themselves, was presumed to be quite beyond the province of the laic multitude; and, accordingly, the elaborated wisdom of churchmen, as exhibited in creeds and canons, became at once the rallying points of their order, and a pretext for withdrawing the Scriptures from the eye of the people,—until the book, given to man by his Maker, for the express purpose of making wise the simple, and of being a guide to the wayfaring man, became unknown beyond the precincts of colleges and convents. Thus controversies, having reference to the meaning of Scripture, prepared the way, so far as the people were concerned, for the loss of Scripture; and the zeal which should have animated men in the cause of truth as revealed in the pages of inspiration, gave place to a most fanatical intolerance in the cause of refinements, and dogmas, which owed their

* Opera, Tom. VIII. in Psalm LIV.

origin to the metaphysical taste, or the ecclesiastical ar
tion of their authors.

It would be both easy and interesting, did our lir
admit, to trace out the connexion which subsists betw
this course of things, as observable in the earlier con
versies of the church, and the ultimate form of that sc
lastic philosophy which has become so memorable a feat
in the history of Christianity and of the human mi
But it must suffice to observe, that though Aristotle
to become so great an authority with ecclesiastics, ne
every thing which favoured his approaching dominion
made its appearance before the name of that philosop
became an object of veneration among churchmen. E
those among the fathers who were always prepared
vindicate the doctrines of Plato, were generally regard
of Aristotle. But, in process of time, the mystical ex
vagance into which they were often led by the idealisr
the former, disposed them to favour the more scien
method of reasoning which distinguished the latter.
doubt, the faults of the scholastic system were many
serious; and its effect, as a means of impeding the
gress of truth, even subsequently to the revival of letters,
been of a formidable description. But its impression
Christianity was, upon the whole, much less injurious t
had been made upon it by Asiatic and Grecian sp
latists; and, aided as it was by the more logical geniu
the Latin Fathers, it may be said to have conserved
great points of evangelical doctrine during the long inte
of the middle age.

In our own day, the spirit of religious controversy
been so attempered by the improved condition of soc
as to be much less repugnant to the genius of Christia
than in any preceding period. Still, much of the idle,
speculative, and the disingenuous, and not a little of
unjust and malevolent, may be observed in the langı
of modern controversy, enough to show that human na

continues the same, and that all hope of its further improvement in this respect must have reference to the further influence of that message of mercy which, rightly understood, produces nothing but *good will toward men.* The peace of the world and the church must be sought, less in a scientific unity of opinion, than in a more abounding philanthropy. All who have gone out in pursuit of this object by any other course, have missed their way. The truth is not to be sacrificed; and as little is it to be served by a spirit at variance with its own expansive charity. Much has been attempted to make men of one mind; little has been done, comparatively, towards making them one in *heart.*

LECTURE VII.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE INFLUENCE OF GENTILE PHILOSOPHY.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
—COLOSSIANS II. 8.

IN the preceding Lecture, an attempt was made to distinguish between some real faults chargeable on the earlier Fathers as controversialists, and certain points with respect to which their errors, to say the least, have been greatly exaggerated. It has appeared, that much in the manner of the Fathers as defenders of Christianity, which it has been fashionable to describe as most inexcusable and pernicious, was, in fact, precisely the course of proceeding which their accusers have been wont to applaud as taking place among ourselves. It was a great object with those ancient writers to obtain the testimony of nature in favour of revelation,—while under the term nature it was their manner to include every thing relating to the social condition of the human race, no less than the general appearances and laws of the material universe. Man and the universe were of God, and must be in harmony with the revelation which has come from God. The object of the early guides of the church in this connexion, was not only legitimate, but creditable alike to their intelligence as scholars, and to their feeling as men. That they did

not always prosecute this course wisely is admitted, and we have dwelt at some length on the injurious license which these broader views sometimes disposed them to assume in the interpretation of the sacred writings. In the hope of removing or softening some of the points at issue between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom from above, they adopted those methods of explaining the inspired word which deprived it of its proper authority, by depriving it of all certain meaning, and which sufficed, in too many instances, to place the whole weight of the authority left to it, on the side of error.

It has appeared, also, that the errors of temper generally betrayed in the contentions between philosophers, were too frequently allowed to make their appearance among disputants who had taken upon them the profession of Christianity. We have seen, moreover, that the effect of this temper, and of the form which the controversies of the early ages of the church assumed, was to introduce those scholastic abridgments of Christianity, which, under the name of creeds or canons, superseded the Scriptures, conferred an undue authority on the ministers of religion, and contributed to the manifest deterioration of every thing Christian. To this last subject we shall now advert more at length, the first point that will demand our attention in the present Lecture being—the influence of the ancient philosophy as facilitating the establishment of FALSE AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH.

I. The introduction, and the systematic augmentation of such authority, was a result which could not fail to ensue, when such topics as became matters of debate between the early Christians and their opponents were taken up in the spirit and the form which characterized the early ecclesiastical controversies.

These discussions had always been conducted with the greatest acrimony when relating to matters which human reason is least competent to determine. Most of the

particulars thus debated had been left in much
obscurity natural to them by the sacred writers. The
partial nature of the communications made even by
Evangelists and the Apostles in regard to certain my
rious facts peculiar to revelation, supplied a larger num
of the topics on which there would be ample room f
difference of judgment.

The vain curiosity, and mistaken confidence, which
so many of the philosophers of antiquity, and more e
cially their disciples, to affect an intimate knowledg
things concerning which very little could possibly
known, soon became observable in the writings of
fessed Christians. Under this influence many were
posed to conclude that there could not be much in
modes of being among purely spiritual natures, or eve
the manner of existence peculiar to Deity, which a
perly disciplined reason might not in some sense com
hend. Hence the early ecclesiastical writers do not o
speak concerning the Divine nature, or of the great fac
our redemption, as the Incarnation, the Atonement,
the work of the Holy Spirit, as involving anything r
inexplicable. On the contrary, they are generally prep
with modes of illustrating their most abstract concept
on such themes; and these illustrations are gene
adduced as though possessing all the clearness, and c
ing along with them all the evidence that reason
demand. In so far this class of authors may be sai
have anticipated a leading maxim of the scholastic p
sophy, which was to propound what should have
deemed the unquestionable facts of revelation, as ma
to be demonstrated as true from their own nature
order that the belief of them might be an act of the rea
induced by the force of internal evidence, and not m
an act of submission to an external authority.

But in proportion to the mysteriousness belongin
necessity, more or less, to some matters of opinion, is

ability—we may say, the certainty—that such matters be differently viewed by different minds. And when fact is so little borne in mind, that men learn to dogze on such topics, as though capable of the most demonstration, there will be instances in which l confidence will be found in opposite extremes, the ıphant conclusions of one man, being so much ıble fallacy in the esteem of another. Thus ample sion was made for perpetuating differences—differ- maintained with equal positiveness on opposite ; and men are never more disposed to exercise an icit reliance on authority, than when it is thus made to ınt itself as the only means of escape from endless ıtation.

ıe natural indolence of the human mind, however, 'er disposing men to receive opinions upon trust, ır than incur the labour of inquiry. Nor is it, indeed, regretted, while the condition of mankind shall ex- its present inequalities, that there should be a very ral tendency to pay a large amount of deference to the ions of men recognized as among the wise and good. immortal Bacon has somewhere said, that "one t to attend to the undemonstrated assertions of the more than to the demonstrations of others." But indolence of the human mind, and our natural disude under suspense and uncertainty, are sufficient to ınt for the fact, that the degree of submission which ıe to the Divine authority alone, should have been so rendered to the authority of man, as thrust into its . When men deliver their message in the name of Deity, and their high delegation is duly accredited, it once imperative that we submit to their guidance. there has ever been a proneness in the majority of ind to extend this submission much further; and were many things in the usages common to the ols of ancient philosophy which served to strengthen

this tendency, and to generate the mischiefs natural to it.

Through several centuries preceding the advent of the Redeemer, nearly every man giving himself to the study of philosophy had his *authority*, or, in more usual speech, his *master*, on whom he placed something like an implicit reliance. Few persons of this class presumed to avow opinions as their own, without attempting to secure them against rude opposition, or contempt, by connecting them with some great name. Thus it became proverbial, that with the Pythagoreans, the *ipse dixit* of their chief was an end of all strife. Apollonius of Tyana is described as announcing his doctrine toward the close of life in the most dogmatic manner, and as vindicating himself in so doing, by observing, that "when young, he sought after truth; that in his old age, it became him to speak, not as one who was still *seeking*, but as one who had *found*."* But Apollonius had long dogmatized on the authority of others, as was the manner of persons in his vocation, before doing so on his own account. He traded in capital of this sort as belonging to other men, until capital of the same sort became his own. In brief, there is abundant reason to conclude, that mental independence, and an earnest search after truth, had no such place among the philosophical sects of antiquity as we find ceded to it among ourselves. We have more settled truth, and therefore more earnestness.†

But in the church this undue submission to authority was soon manifest. Among the believers at Corinth, even

* Brucker's Hist. Philos. Tom. II. p. 105.

† Origen shows that the charge of adopting opinions on trust, which Celsus preferred against the Christians, was quite as applicable to the multitude who enrolled themselves as disciples in the different schools of philosophy. Opera, I. 328, 329. But in this passage, which is too long to be extracted, we may see how possible it was that undue authority in religion should be making advances, even through the influence of persons who protested against it.

in the apostolic age, some were for Paul, some for Apollos, others for Cephas, and others for Christ. At a subsequent period, the kind of warfare which had been so long carried on by the different schools of philosophy, was prosecuted in the same spirit, and with the same weapons, by the disciples of Origen on the one side, and the parties opposed to his doctrines on the other.* In the lapse of a few generations, an appeal to the writings of the fathers became, what an appeal to the great names in philosophy had long been—an established method of determining the truth or falsehood of opinions. Language expressive of this kind of admiration and confidence in reference to the great ecclesiastical writers became prevalent, which was not only such as could not be justified, but such as served to prepare the way for the grossest superstition and idolatry. A religious writer, one of the most accomplished of our time, has justly remarked on this point: "Well might a warning be taken by the church, even now, against

* It must be observed here, that, so early as the beginning of the third century, a distinction was admitted among Christians between the faith of the many, as being chiefly a matter of authority, and that of the few, as being the effect of more adequate inquiry and training. This distinction was connected with another, which made the creed of these classes materially different from each other, the superior knowledge of the one being regarded, not merely as an effect of the superior intelligence consequent on better culture, but as embracing certain doctrines which the writers of the New Testament had entrusted in an oral form to their immediate disciples. The Stromata of Clemens Alexandrinus is mainly occupied in explaining and commending this dangerous theory; and his authority has never ceased to be put in requisition by men inclined to act upon a doctrine of *reserve*, and disposed to substitute "commandments of men," in the place of commandments from a higher source. It was the vanity of being thought peculiarly illuminated, which introduced this *disciplina arcani* both in the religion and in the schools of the Gentile world; and to the same cause we must attribute its admission into the church, together with the evils which followed in its train. Stromat. Lib. I. p. 322, *et seq.*; VI. 771, *et seq. et alibi.* Origen, contra Cels. Lib. I. 325, 326. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. II. c. i. See also, for further intimations as to the steps by which ecclesiastical tradition became authoritative, III. 39; IV. 14; V. 6, 11, 16, 17, 20, 23, 24; VI. 13.

the danger of indulging the spirit of exaggeration and of fond adulatory regard to the illustrious dead. It was this very spirit, as much as any other influence we can name, which effected the ruin, and hastened the corruption of early Christianity. Hence, directly, sprang some of the worst errors which, in a matured state, strengthened the despotism of Rome, and made its services idolatrous, and its practices abominable." In illustration of this general statement the same writer adds, "The praises of Basil, and of his institutions, are on the lips of most of the contemporary and succeeding church writers, as well Latins as Greeks; and most of the oriental monkish establishments were founded upon the model of which he was the author. Isidore (Lib. I. Ep. 61) reproaches one who, while he professed high regard to the words of our DIVINELY INSPIRED FATHER, Basil, practically set his authority at nought. Equivalent expressions are employed by other writers." *

* Fanaticism, p. 121. Yet it was not immediately that things came to this pass—at least in the Latin church. What can be more emphatic—more protestant, in reference to the authority of Scripture, than the following passage from the pen of Cyprian. "Beatas quoque Apostolas Paulus, à Domino electus et missus, et prædicator veritatis Evangelicæ constitutus, hæc eadem in Epistola sua ponit, dicens: Dominus Jesus in qua nocte tradebatur, accepit panem, et gratias agens fregit, et dixit: Hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur, hac facite in meam commemorationem. Simili modo et calicem postquam cœnatum est accepit, dicens: Hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine: hoc facite quotiescunque biberitis in meam commemorationem: quotiescunque enim ederitis panem istum et calicem biberitis, mortem Domini annunciabitis quoadusque veniat. Quod si et à Domino præcipitur, et ab Apostolo ejus hoc idem confirmatur et traditur, ut quotiescunque biberimus in commemorationem Domini, hoc faciamus, quod fecit et Dominus; invenimus non observari à nobis quod mandatum est, nisi eadem quæ Dominus fecit nos quoque faciamus et calicem Domini pari ratione miscentes a divino magisterio non recedamus. Ab Evangelicis autem præceptis omnino recedendum non esse, et eadem quæ magister docuit et fecit, discipulos quoque observare et facere debere, constantius et fortius alio in loco beatus Apostolus docet, dicens: Miror quod sic tam cito demutamini ab eo qui vos vocavit ad gratiam, ad aliud Evangelium, quod non est aliud, nisi sunt aliqui qui vos turbant, et volunt convertere Evangelium Christi. Sed

ill, some difficulty remained. The Fathers did not all k the same thing. In the hands of a skilful polemic, : testimony might be made to favour unauthorized con- ions. Where, then, was that further authority to be d, which should be deemed competent to set forth the egate wisdom to be found in the voluminous produc- s of the Fathers themselves. The Fathers had come, as uthority, in the place of the Scriptures, and now it be- e necessary that some new authority should take the e of Fathers. The Fathers had become an authority they might determine what the Scriptures teach, and a new authority has become necessary to determine ; the Fathers teach. It was the pressure of this diffi- y which prepared the way for the great system of eccle- ical diplomacy developed in the history of church ds and councils. During some time, and especially e they were only provincial, these assemblies confined nselves to a moderate kind of arbitration in relation to differences as arose from the source just mentioned, from some others. By degrees the authority exercised me independent; and, at length, infallibility itself was ned, in the most unequivocal terms. It was now no e than consistent that the errors of dissentients should isited, not only with ecclesiastical censures, but with penalties.* Men who set up an infallible standard

nos aut Angelus de cœlo aliter annunciet, præterquam quod annunciavi- robis, anathema sit. Sicut prædiximus, et nunc iterum dico: Si quis annunciaverit præterquam quod accepistis, anathema sit. Cum ergo ipse Apostolus, neque Angelus de cœlo annunciare possit aliter aut e, præterquam quod semel Christus docuit, et Apostoli ejus annunci- nt; miror satis unde hoc usurpatum sit, ut contra Evangelicam et olicam disciplinam quibusdam in locis aqua offeratur in Dominico , quæ sola Christi sanguinem non possit exprimere."—Opera, Ep. 63.

Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. Lib. V. c. 23; VI. 33, 37, 43; VII. 7; X. 4, 5.

time before the close of the third century, the bishops assembled in il at Antioch, after deposing Paul of Samosata, petitioned the Emperor us to expel him by force from the church of that city; and the here-

ought to be intolerant. Show me the authority that may not err, and the question of submission is settled. In such case, obedience *should not be dispensed with.* In this view, the church of Rome never persecutes: she merely punishes —punishes the delinquent.

Thus there are links which connect the first step in an undue subjection to authority, with prostration before the most appalling despotism. Not that the authority of the church was allowed wholly to supersede the authority of the Fathers. On the contrary, the doctrines with which the church connected its sanction were set forth as those which had been always maintained by the great body of believers, and by the most accredited ecclesiastical writers. Hence the Fathers were continually appealed to in support of the various dogmas which had been formally approved by the church. Nor was this all. The matters were not few which the church had left undecided, and in regard to these the appeal of the private disputant continued to be to the judgment of ecclesiastical antiquity, as the legitimate arbiter in such cases.*

In this manner the search of the believer ceased to be a search after truth, and became a search after the authority that should tell him what is truth. This point determined, his obligation is restricted to a mere reception of truth, or to a very circumscribed method of vindicating it, as a matter already defined and established. This spell-bound state of the human faculties may be traced in part to the ill-directed genius of Aristotle, but in a much greater degree

siarch was thus removed. So prepared were these primitive worthies for that merging of the spiritual in the secular, and that substituting of coercion for conviction, which soon followed.—Ibid. VII. 30; and Note by Valerius.

* The heretical sects were distinguished from the orthodox, less by the strained interpretation which they imposed on the canonical Scriptures, than by the circumstance of their receiving or rejecting those documents at pleasure. This is the matter of complaint and censure in the Prescriptions of Tertullian, in almost every chapter from the seventeenth to the forty-fourth. —Opera, p. 208—218.

to a dishonest application of his principles, on the part of men who professed to be his disciples. All the facts we have now mentioned were so many steps preliminary to the establishment of the system of reasoning and speculation known during the middle ages by the name of the Scholastic Philosophy. As we have observed, much included in that philosophy had existence in the church long before the system itself had acquired its ecclesiastical form and designation. During several centuries from the time of the apostles, Aristotle, as we have stated, was either wholly unknown to the defenders of Christianity, or was regarded by them with suspicion. By some he was denounced as the advocate of principles tending to nothing short of atheism in religion, and to great mischief in every department of morals. But the implements of warfare which his genius had fashioned, were laid under successful contribution by heretics; and being forced upon the notice of churchmen through this channel, they were at length enlisted on the side of orthodoxy. So great was this revolution when accomplished, that the influence of Plato among the Christians of the East through the early centuries of the church, was followed by an influence from Aristotle, not less memorable among the churches of the West.

There was, however, this great difference between these great men in their respective ascendancies. The influence of Plato tended to change Christianity from the pure state in which its first preachers had left it; while that of Aristotle tended to fix it in the impure state into which it had thus passed. The genius of the former had affected the substance of revealed truth; the genius of the latter merely supplied the means of defining and vindicating the different topics in which that truth was said to consist. As known in ecclesiastical history, the one aspired to explore and reveal all mysteries; the other was content with setting forth the processes by which

and according to circumstances, belonged to her. could not contradict herself, but she might, in sense, outgrow herself. But this claim of exemption error, as Archbishop Whately says, naturally preclud *reform* in the future. "The smallest change in any cle of *faith*, would break the talisman of infallibility, the magic edifice of papal dominion would crumble ruins. In matters of discipline, indeed, the Romish ch might introduce reforms, without compromising her cl since *there* the question is one not of truth, but of ex ency, which may vary in each different age and cou But her regulations respecting discipline have bee intertwined with doctrinal points, that she has gene dreaded to alter anything, lest her infallibility shoul called in question. For instance, it has never been tended that the adoration of images and relics is *ess* to Christianity; there would therefore be no inconsist on the part of the Romish church in remedying abuse: but it has been thought probable, and not wit reason, that to do so might raise suspicions as to wisdom of originally sanctioning the practice; as to soundness of the arguments and decisions by which i maintained against Protestants; and as to the tru the miraculous legends connected with it; and the holders of the Romish system have accordingly al dreaded (as was remarkably exemplified not long sin respect to some efforts toward such an amelioration, in Germany) to touch a single stone of their infirm fa lest another, and another, should be displaced. For who are conscious, or who at all suspect, (whether wi without good reason) that great part of the system are maintaining is thoroughly unsound, are naturall to regard the beginning of reformation (even as Sol says of the beginning of strife) as 'like the letting o water;' when once commenced, they know not to w may proceed, or how it can be stopped. And thus

he claim to infallibility burdens the Church of Rome
a load of long-accumulated errors and abuses, to
ı many probably of her adherents are by no means
, but of which they know not how to relieve her."*
r is the race of men extinct, who, while renouncing
laim of infallibility, as to the letter, act upon it as to
›irit; and in whose conduct, accordingly, the kind of
to which the preceding extract refers, are often
'est. The power of the state in matters of religion,
cognized in this country at the Reformation, was
›yed to remove a certain class of corruptions, but it
ısed to set forth with new authority such as were
ıed, and it introduced others before unknown. From
rst existence of our ecclesiastical establishment as
stant, to the present hour, every mind, in proportion
; sanity, has felt the force of the question put by
Bacon—viz., how it should have happened, that the
should be so continuously needing modification and
ge,—the church never?† There is very little in the
or the reasoning, of the passage just cited, that does
ıpply to all ecclesiastical establishments, whether
h or protestant; and the evils resulting from this
, in the two cases, are all found to be different in
e only, not in kind. The tendency and object of
institutions has been to give law to opinion; and
other methods have failed, this object has been too
ally sought by means which have derived the whole
ir sanctity from the end they were meant to subserve.
ief, the assumption that we do well to dictate, is not
om the assumption that we should do well to force
ence to our decisions; and the habit of deferring to
ıthority of others on grounds which seem reasonable,
en at a slight remove only from that unreasonable
›f trust and deference which ministers to the worst

* Errors of Romanism, 194—196.
† Works, VI. 61—97.

species of despotism,—an evil plant, which, as we l seen, was of large growth in the ancient world, but wh admitted into the soil of the church, became a great t overshadowing many nations, and destroying every gr thing.

II. From the influence of philosophy in relation false authority in the church, we proceed to notice effects in relation to the opinions and usages wh became connected with BAPTISM, the EUCHARIST, and so other services honoured as Christian SACRAMENTS.

Among the many things which fill us with surpr when directing our first attention to the writings of t early Fathers, is the manner in which they frequently press themselves concerning the received notions on t subject of Magic. That there was much reality in th vain science, appears to have been their settled bel The magic which was supposed to come from dealin with *evil* spirits was, as a matter of course, rigorou proscribed by all ecclesiastical writers.* But the doctr very commonly maintained on this subject was, that it unquestionable, that there are certain names, forms of pression, and practices, which possess a singular pote in relation to evil powers; on the general principle a that there is no evil in the world without its oppo good, we are to believe that there are utterances, forms, which will be availing as opposed to such pow and as the means of procuring positive benefit from be natures, and especially from that Nature which is source of all purity and beneficence.†

* Origen, contra Cels. Lib. I. pp. 325, 344, 355, 356, 374, 383, *et alibi.* T Opera, Apol. c. XXXV.

† Origen, contra Cels. Lib. I. 340—344; II. 425. The former of passages touches upon the questions subsequently so much in debate bet the Nominalists and Realists. We learn from Tertullian, that the pract Christians in his day, of frequently signing themselves with the cross generally observed by the heathen, and regarded as a magical ceremo

The kind of magic which was said to consist in an intercourse with malignant agencies, was generally imputed to the pagan priests, by the first Christians; and not only the frauds of oracles, but the prevalent errors and vices of the heathen world, were regarded as proceeding mainly from the machinations of demons. It is in this view of it that magic is denounced by Origen as an infernal art. But the same writer speaks of Christians, and in immediate connexion with this language, as casting out devils by merely repeating the name Jesus, or by appealing to some of the miracles wrought in that name, and even ascribes a mystic efficacy to the bare names, or incantations so employed.* The fact of such efficacy he supposes to have been more especially evinced, when the persons opposing themselves by such means to the powers of darkness, have been influenced by truly Christian motives. But he does not hesitate to say, that similar results had frequently followed from these means, as resorted to by men who were not Christians,—a sentiment which he founds in part on experience, and in part on the passage in Matthew, "Have we not in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? to whom he will say, Depart from me, I never knew you, ye that work iniquity." It is denied, indeed, that the name of Christ, when so used, is invoked in the manner of a "spell," or charm; but it is exceedingly difficult to understand the language of this writer if some such meaning is not to be attached to it.† Its explanation should be sought in the general doctrine of Origen and others,

Opera, Ad Uxorem, Lib. II. c. v. See also his account of the practice of exorcism, De Animâ, c. lvii; De Coronâ, c. xi; De Idolatriâ, c. xi; Apol. c. xiii. xxxvii. xli; De Spectaculis, c. xxviii.

* Justin Martyr affirms, that demons never fail to submit themselves when assailed by the name of Jesus, but often prove invulnerable when other names are used, though they should be the names of kings, righteous men, prophets, or patriarchs.—Dial. p. 320. ed. Thirlby; 350, 361. ed. Paris.

† Opera, I. 324, 325. Tertul. Apolog. c. xxiii.

which assumed the existence of some inherent powers in matter, powers which being directed by the Divine will, were sufficient to counteract all its alleged evil tendencies; and such a direction of these powers was presumed to have been not unreasonably connected with the use of certain terms, or the practice of certain forms. Thus the doctrine of an occult power in nature was retained; and retained as open to direction by an influence from above, as well as from beneath.

But it being admitted that the class of persons who were known in the early days of the Roman empire by the name of mathematicians or astrologers, were supposed to be possessed of secrets which enabled them not only to anticipate future events, but to extort the services of spiritual agencies, there was enough in the state of the human mind at that period to render it inevitable, that pretensions of a similar kind, as referring to good, and not to evil natures, would be put forth by not a few professing Christianity. Often, too, the motives of this latter class would not be so much the effect of fraud as of credulity, strengthened, perhaps, by a laudable zeal for the honour of their faith.

In the school of the new Platonists, which, as we have seen, made its appearance in Alexandria at the commencement of the Christian era, it became a favourite doctrine, that the perceptions both of the mind and the body might be so far refined and spiritualized, by means of abstinence and contemplation, as to enable men to pass the ordinary line between the visible and the invisible, and not only to hold a kind of sensible intercourse with the natures of more spiritual regions, but to approach even to an actual vision of the Infinite! Ammonius Sacca, the most celebrated master in this school, contented himself with delivering very moderate precepts for the guidance of men in general; but always exhorted those who would have a place with the rational and the wise, to emp[illegible]

themselves in separating the soul as much as possible from the subduing and polluting influence of the body, and from this region of sense to which the body has been the great means of degrading us. With this view he prohibited the use of wine, and all food having any considerable tendency to invigorate the flesh; the body being the prison in which the soul is confined, and kept in a state of separation from its great Parent.

In opinions and maxims of this nature consisted the science which philosophers described by the name of *Theurgia*. This science owed its origin to the genius of the Orientalists, but obtained its maturity among the priests of Egypt; and in this its ultimate form it embraced the practice of many mystic ceremonies, in addition to the ordinary and more reasonable modes of promoting abstraction from sensible things. Its object was to purify the soul to such a degree, that the faculty within, on which the images of corporeal things were said to be impressed, might become capable, as we have just remarked, of discerning natures belonging to other spheres of existence, and of penetrating the veil between mortals and the Supreme. In the system of these persons, man is possessed, not only of reason, derived immediately from the Deity, but of a sensitive faculty peculiar to the human spirit, on which the images of all mundane things are engraven. The emancipation, and the perfecting of the reason, were to be affected mainly by contemplation; and it pertained to the science of *theurgia* to purify and strengthen the peculiar faculty adverted to, and at the same time to restrain the appetites, and to etherealize the senses of our inferior nature. It must be added, that having to do so immediately with our physical nature, as the supposed seat of so much evil, this science embraced an attention to certain aids which it was supposed might be derived from other substances in the physical system, as from the natural or occult properties of certain herbs

and stones. From these particulars, it will be seen ho nearly allied was the science of *theurgia* with the scienc of magic.*

Ammonius, indeed, though born of Christian parents and always retaining his early profession of Christianity, was a disciple of Plato much more than of St. Paul. His zeal, however, as the advocate of the doctrine now stated, was far from being without its influence on the church. Origen, as we have stated, went far in the way of adopting it. In his work against Celsus, he contends that the mind may be brought into a state of the most vivid con verse with spiritual objects, quite independently of the body, even in the present state of existence. This kind o independence, as it occurs during sleep, he regards as n more than may attach to any season of great mental ab straction. This he supposes to have been especially th case with the ancient prophets, whose visions he conceive to have been real, and adapted to a certain refined state c the senses, as well as to a peculiar sanctity of the sou "Those," he observes, "who investigate these matter deeply, will find that there is a knowledge of them whic the blessed only discover, (as Solomon says, Thou shal find the knowledge of the Lord.) And this state of attain ment may be said to include, a sight adapted to the dis cerning of objects above the ordinary corporeal sight, a cherubim and seraphim; a hearing which receives othe sounds than those produced in the air; a taste that ca wisely distinguish the living bread, the life of the worl which came down from heaven; a smell which, as Pau says, shall inhale the good odour of Christ; and, lastly the touch of which St. John speaks, when he says, tha with his hands he had touched the word of life."† Thi our author describes as a state of "divine" sensation

* Mosheim, De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum Secundum, sect. 31.
† Opera, I. 363, 364.

And this state, be it remembered, is precisely that to which the most eminent among the pagan theurgists professed to aspire. It should be further observed, as a circumstance rendering the theory of these persons somewhat less extravagant, that they regarded the nature of demons, whether good or evil, as being in some degree corporeal, a sort of link between our own mode of existence, and that of purely spiritual being.*

Now the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, were outward signs, intended to denote the gracious influence of the gospel on the nature of those to whom they were administered. It was the avowed object of these services to set forth the transition of humanity from the danger and helplessness of its natural condition, to the state of security and renewed life introduced by Christianity. They were ceremonies to be performed in the use of certain words, and in a certain manner, and with which a spiritual, and, in a great degree, a mysterious influence was to be connected, deeply affecting the character and destiny of the worshipper. A renovation of human nature, more elevated than the heathen theurgist had sought by means of his mystic rites, was to be obtained through the medium of these divine institutes. It must, then, be obvious, from what appears to have been the belief of the human mind at this period in regard to the nature of spiritual influences, that there was much room to fear lest some mystical and superstitious efficacy should be ascribed to the mere forms connected with these institutes, and even to the natural elements employed in them, —such an efficacy as should serve to place them directly in the light of antidotes to the ceremonies supposed to

* We trace these doctrines in the Genii of Mohammed,—beings of a grosser substance than angels, but more ethereal than men, and divided into the classes of Peri, Div, and Tauvins; or fairies, giants, and fates. (Koran, c. vi.) The prophet describes his mission as embracing the restoration of such natures, as well as that of the faithful among men.—Ibid. lv. lxxii. lxxv.

have respect to malignant powers, detracting in this manner from their simple rationality, by allowing them to be regarded as partaking, in some respects, of the same nature with those forbidden ceremonies.

What it would have been reasonable to fear in such a case, history presents as the fact. "If things so wonderful," says Origen, "are done by infernal spirits, may we not fairly conclude that things still more mysterious may be done by the immediate agency of Omnipotence?"* This reasoning, though applied in the first instance to the miracles by which divine truth had been attested, is extended by this writer to the divine influence generally, and is precisely that which disposed the heretical sects, together with the orthodox believer, to look on the sacraments as provisions of infinite goodness, opposed, not only in their leading design, but in their matter and form, and in their secret import and workings, to what was commonly believed with regard to the operations of evil, whether connected with the laws of matter, with the influence of spirits, or with both. It may be true that this assumed secret power of names, and forms, and substances, when employed for the purpose of communicating spiritual benefit, was far from being regarded by Christians as inherent in the things themselves. On the contrary, it was often very carefully described as having its origin solely from the will of God. But so long as this power was viewed as having a real connexion with such things, either naturally or by appointment, the homage due to the real cause would be transferred, more or less, to the form and matter of the ceremony; the words spoken would be no longer common words, and the waters of baptism, and the elements of the eucharist, would be no longer common things.

Accordingly, we find the doctrine of baptismal regene-

* Opera, I. 425.

ration inculcated by nearly all the earlier Fathers: not only by such writers as Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, but in the less speculative productions of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Cyprian. Justin Martyr describes all baptized persons as being "illuminated," and "regenerated," by means of that rite; as having received the remission of all their sins, and as partakers of a second birth, distinguished from their first, which is of course described as being the result, in part, of their own knowledge and choice. Nor does he use this language in a highly metaphorical sense, but so far according to its literal meaning as to have left but a few shades of error to be added to his misconceptions on the subject by the men of later times.* Tertullian speaks of the soul as "renewed, in its second birth, by water, and power from on high; the veil of its corruption being then taken away, so that it beholds the light in all its brightness." Its first birth was from an impure parentage, its second is from the Holy Spirit; and henceforth even the flesh becomes the servant of the Spirit. Hence, in baptism, the soul is said to be cleansed from all its sins, and made capable of obtaining eternal life; the Spirit of God, as possessed by Adam in paradise, being therein regained. He states, moreover, that the water in this ceremony is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, who never fails to descend upon it as the name of God is invoked by the officiating minister.†

Cyprian's theology was formed in the school of Tertullian, and on the subject of baptism was in strict agreement with that of his acknowledged master. Both these writers

* Ἐπειδὴ τὴν πρώτην λένεσιν ἡμῶν ἀγνοοῦντες κατ' ἀνάγκην γεγενήμεθα ἐξ ὑγρᾶς σπορᾶς κατὰ μίξιν τὴν τῶν γονέων πρὸς ἀλλήλους, καὶ ἐν ἔθεσι φαύλοις καὶ πονηραῖς ἀνατροφαῖς γεγόναμεν ὅπως μὴ ἀνάγκης τέκνα μηδὲ ἀγνοίας μένωμεν, ἀλλὰ προαιρέσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης κ. τ. ἑ.—Apol. I. pp. 93, 94.

† Opera, De Animâ, c. xli.; Adversus Marcion, c. xxviii.; De Baptismo, c. iv. v. vi. viii. In these last passages the writer speaks more than once of the efficacy of baptism as resulting from the ministration of an angel, called Angelus Baptismi.

perfidious delays, was able to resist and prevail for a time, until he came to the water, where he was conquered and destroyed. But the blessed apostle Paul declares that sea to have been the sacrament of baptism, saying, 'Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' And then he adds that 'all these things were figures for us.' Even so daily is it done among us, when Satan is lashed, wounded, and tortured by our exorcists, the voice being human, the power divine. Often does he say that he will allow the men of God to go; but in what he says he fails, and practises the same falsehood and obstinate frauds which Pharaoh formerly resorted to. But when the person so possessed is come to the saving water, and to the sanctification of baptism, we ought to know and believe that Satan is there conquered, and that the man being thus devoted to God, is liberated through the Divine regard toward him. For if scorpions and serpents, who are most powerful in dry places, may retain their power when plunged into water, then may wicked spirits (the scorpions and serpents on whom we have power to tread) continue in the body of a man, in whom the Holy Spirit begins to inhabit by baptism and sanctification."*

* "Quod si aliquis in illo movetur quod quidam de iis qui ægri baptizantur, spiritibus adhuc immundis tentantur; sciat diaboli nequitiam pertinacem usque ad aquam Salutarem valere, in baptismo vero omne nequitiæ suæ virus amittere. Quod exemplum cernimus in rege Pharaone, qui diu reluctatus, et in sua perfidia demoratus, tamdiu resistere potuit et prævalere, donec ad aquam veniret: quo cum venisset, et victus est, et extinctus. Mare autem illud sacramentum baptismi fuisse, declarat beatus Apostolus Paulus dicens: Nolo enim vos ignorare, fratres, quia patres nostri omnes sub nube fuerunt, et omnes per mare transierunt, et omnes in Moyse baptizati sunt in nube et in mari. Et addidet dicens: Hæc autem omnia figuræ nostræ fuerunt. Quod hodie etiam geritur, ut per exorcistas voce humana et potestate divina flagellatur, et uratur, et torqueatur diabolus. Et cum exire se, et homines Dei dimittere sæpe dicat, in eo tamen quod dixerit fallat, et id quod per Pharaonem

One effect of views like these in relation to baptism was, that it should be deemed strictly necessary to salvation; and consequent on this conclusion was an admission of the validity of baptism by whomsoever performed, if administered in the name of the Trinity. Another result from the same cause, was the practice of deferring this rite until the near approach of death. As the sign and the thing signified were supposed to go together, it was judged important that the washing away of sin, said to take place in baptism, should not be sought before the season in which the contracting of any further defilement would be in the greatest degree improbable.* Thus baptism was made, in some measure, to occupy the place which, in a later age, was assigned to the sacrament of extreme unction. These misconceptions with regard to this ordinance, prevailed among the most orthodox, while the errors of the heretical sects in relation to it, were even more extravagant.†

With regard to the eucharist, when we remember that

prius gestum est, eodem mendacio obstinationis et fraudis exerceat. Cum tamen ad aquam salutarem, atque ad baptismi sanctificationem venitur, scire debemus et fidere quia illic diabolus opprimitur, et homo Deo dicatus divina indulgentia liberatur. Nam si scorpii et serpentes, qui in sicco prevalent, in aquam præcipitati prævalere possunt, aut sua venema retinere; possunt et spiritus nequam, (qui scorpii et serpentes appellantur, et tamen per nos data a Domino potestate calcantur,) permanere ultra in hominis corpore, in quo baptizato et sanctificato incipit Spiritus Sanctus habitare."—Ep. 69. Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the early Fathers generally, often speak of baptism as valueless in the case of such as afterwards live ungodly lives. But delusive formalism which they thus sought to counteract, was an evil which their own unauthorized language on this subject had served to produce.

* This is the reason assigned by Augustine for the delay of his baptism. Opera, Confess. Lib. I. c. xi.

† The disciples of Marcion are censured by Epiphanius, as repeating the baptism when they had fallen into any sin; as allowing the rite to be administered in cases of emergency by females; and as accustomed when a brother had died without baptism, to appoint that some surviving disciple should be baptized in the place of such person, in the hope that thus the omission might not be remembered against him in the morning of the surrection.—Lardner, VIII. 417, 483.

it relates to the sacrifice of Christ, from which baptism derives its origin and all its value, it will not be supposed that the causes which led to so much misconception as to the less, would be without their influence on the greater. But the corruptions of the eucharist, though ultimately more extraordinary, and perhaps even more injurious than were those of baptism, were not perceivable so early, and made their way with much less rapidity.* As a connexion was believed to subsist between the application of water to the body, and a certain cleansing of the spiritual nature, it followed that a similar relation would be regarded as subsisting between a reception of the consecrated bread and wine, and the spiritual benefit of the recipient. The rhetorical language in which this rite is generally set forth by the Fathers, makes it extremely difficult to determine their precise views concerning it. But the doctrine of transubstantiation, as now maintained by the Romanist, is manifestly the fruit of the Aristotelian philosophy, as adopted by the subtle genius of the schoolmen in the middle age. The sufficiency of what the Redeemer was said to have performed and endured in our behalf as man, was very properly said to depend on his being viewed as more than man; and in process of time, it was insisted, that the efficacy of the elements in the eucharist must depend, not only on their being really the body and the blood of Christ, but on their being as really his soul and divinity! It was from his proper humanity that the virtue was supposed to have gone forth which healed the woman

* To the age of Tertullian, the rite was very generally connected with an ordinary meal, called the Agapæ, or love-feast, (Apologeticus, c. xxxix.) and when so administered, was not much liable to corruption in the way of superstition. The ostentation introduced into these feasts by the more wealthy believers, tended not to the increase of devotion, and led by degrees to their discontinuance. Tertullian, when he became a Montanist, cast almost every kind of reproach on these convivial meetings, (De Jejuniis, c. xvii.) Clemens of Alexandria had shown himself capable of distinguishing between their use and their abuse.—Pedagog. ii. p. 141.

who touched him;* and on the same ground—namely, that substance was supposed to have a mysterious connexion with substance, and nature with its kindred nature, it became the prevalent belief, that by the words of consecration there was a fitness imparted to the very elements of bread and wine, which made them in a sense the cause, as well as the actual seat and channel, of the blessings of salvation.† At length it was boldly affirmed, that by the services of the priest, every thing real in the nature of the Redeemer, and in his mediatorial character, became present in the two forms which the rite exhibited to the eye of the observer. The priest, by whose utterances this all-surpassing miracle was wrought, might be both ignorant and depraved; but the efficacy of the service was not in the least dependent on the personal character of the priest, his performance being viewed, less as his own act, than as that of the church, through his medium.‡ By this subtle invention, the imagination of the worshipper was raised above the meanness of the immediate instrument, and taught to bow itself before that shadowy, incomprehensible power—the church! Thus the assumed sanctity of the vast and the remote, was interposed as a veil to conceal the insignificance and meanness of the personal and immediate. Individual priests might be

* Mark v. 25—34.

† Eusebius relates a story, on the authority of Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, from which it appears, that so early as the third century, superstition had scarcely anything to add to the misconceptions which had already obtained in relation to this sacrament. (Hist. Lib. VI. c. xl.) Its celebration at funerals, and on the anniversaries of the martyrs, was general, and of very early origin; nor can we censure the feeling in which the practice originated, though it prepared the way for many evils. Among these evils were masses for the dead, and creature worship.—Cyprian. Opera, De Mortalitate, 162—166. Tertul. De Coronâ, c. iii.; De Exhortat. Castitat. c. xi.

‡ Cyprian, indeed, protested against the validity of baptism administered by persons deemed heretics (Ep. 67, 69, 70, *et alibi*); nor was he singular in this particular (Euseb. VII. 5, 7, 9. Clemens. Strom. I. 317); but in the age of Augustine the contrary was the orthodox opinion.

baptism to the hour of death, and the many disputes about re-baptism, disappear from the p ecclesiastical history, and the rite which was mear purely initiatory, is found in its proper place in th of administration. The institutions of which w speak as human inventions, are viewed by the Ro as of Divine appointment: but the traces of these church of the third and fourth centuries, amount thing more than certain indications of a feeling of v to something of this kind that should give harmony system which was then in process of development, wl existed of an external nature as the result of this f being little more than the faint prognostics of which afterwards become prevalent.* As these new prevailed, and became established, they were regar common with the true sacraments of baptism a eucharist, as bearing an immediate relation to the pe religion of the professing Christian. Baptism im the grace of regeneration. Confirmation augment new life thus bestowed, so that the soul grew towa adult stature in Christ. The Eucharist further op as a perpetual means of vivifying the spiritual ener the inner man; and while Penance presented itsel special means of removing those sins which are con recurring in human life, Extreme Unction extend benefits to the believer in his last moments, cleansi last stains of human frailty, and fitting the disem spirit for its great audit! Thus the doctrine of the ments was so constructed, that religion could n begin, nor be sustained, nor end, successfully, w them. They were the Alpha and the Omega; an priest, as being alone competent to their administ

* Cyprian speaks of "omnia sacramenta" (Ep. 70); but it mus membered that the term "sacramentum" was applied to religious and doctrines, with little restriction or discrimination, in the early Christianity.

was to the worshipper in the place of the Almighty, having the destiny of his victim at his pleasure.

The sacrament of Orders, and that of Matrimony, owe their origin as such, in part to a wish that the observances of this kind should be of the mystic number seven, the number of perfection;* but mainly as the consequence of a philosophical systematizing spirit, which saw in the one the means of perpetuating the species, in the other an agency for perpetuating the church, as consisting of regenerated souls. In this manner the relation of the clergy to their people became that of spiritual fathers, marriage itself being dependant on their sanction, and all who were baptized by them being supposed to have been made partakers of a spiritual life by their means.†

* It is in the following terms that Cyprian expatiates on this number—so symbolic in its import, according to the Pythagorean, no less than the Cabalist. "Quid vero in Maccabeis, septem fratres et natalium pariter et virtutum sorte consimiles, septenarium numerum sacramento perfectæ consummationis implentes? sic septem fratres in martyrio cohærentes, ut primi in dispositione divina septem dies annorum septem millia continentes, ut septem spiritus et angeli septem qui assistunt et conversantur ante faciem Dei, et lucernæ septiformes in tabernaculo martyrii, et in Apocalypsi septem candelabra aurea, et apud Solomonem columnæ septem, super quas ædificavit domum sapientia: ita et istic septem fratrum numerus, ecclesias septem numeri sui quantitate complexus, secundum quod in primo regnorum libro legimus, sterilem septem peperisse. Et apud Esaiam: Septem mulieres unum hominem apprehendunt, cujus invocari super se nomen exposcunt. Et Apostolus Paulus qui hujus legitimi numeri et certi meminit, ad septem ecclesias scribit. Et in Apocalypsi Dominus mandata sua divina, et præcepta cœlestia ad septem ecclesias, et earundum angelos dirigit, qui nunc istic in fratribus numerus invenitur, ut consummatio legitima compleatur." De Exhortat. Martyrii, pp. 178, 179. Hence, with the seven sacraments, we have to remember the seven virtues, the seven deadly sins, and other matters so treated.

† Hampden's Scholastic Philosophy Considered, pp. 313, 314. No reader familiar with the works of Cyprian will wonder that the forms of perpetuating the Christian ministry should have been ere long raised to the place of a sacrament. The same may be said of the notions which prevailed with regard to penance; while the importance attached to an imposition of the hands of the bishops on the persons of the baptized; and the manner in which the aids of religion were extended to the sick and the dying, are of a nature to prepare the student of ecclesiastical history for the more systematic corruptions which afterwards become so conspicuous.

Our limits will not allow of any adequate reference to the remains of this state of things in the doctrine of the sacraments, and in the popular apprehension concerning them, in our own protestant country. But much, very much of the fiction which was long since connected with the system now described is observable among us, the errors of the past having been only very partially discarded even by the most accredited teachers of Christianity. Myriads still believe that baptism regenerates; that confirmation gives an increase and fixedness to the work of baptism; and if extreme unction be no longer resorted to, the eucharist is often so erroneously presented, as to supply its place, and to operate in a manner hardly less delusive.

IV. From the influence of the ancient systems of philosophy on the sacraments of Christianity, we must now proceed to glance at their more direct effect upon its DOCTRINES. We speak of their *more direct* effect in this connexion, because, as will have been manifest, many things advanced in regard to the history of ancient speculation, in this and the preceding lectures, could not fail to take with them a strong indirect influence of this nature. Were it not so, it would be necessary to reserve this important topic for more extended treatment than belongs to our present purpose.

There is hardly another subject on which so great a degree of misapprehension prevails, as with respect to the comparative state of opinion in the church in relation to the doctrines of the gospel during the interval which preceded the accession of Constantine, and in the ages which followed. The age which preceded that of Constantine, is not unfrequently adverted to as the age of Christian light and purity. The persons by whom such representations are made,—and they are not a small body,—do not seem to have suspected for a moment, that the corruption of Christian doctrine by princely bishops, perilous

as those corruptions are admitted to have been, are almost trivial, in comparison with those to which every tenet of the Christian faith was more or less subject, when such bishops as existed had existence as men exposed beyond others to the enmity of princes, and to the experience of persecution at their hand. In the vast space between the age of Constantine and our own, there is scarcely a corruption of "the truth as it is in Jesus" presenting itself, which might not be shown to have made its appearance, and to have received considerable development, in the first three centuries. If this be a fact, it can never be to our credit that we should be unacquainted with it. Nor can it be consistent with integrity that we should even *seem* to be unacquainted with it. Nor is there any evil consequence to be apprehended from the fullest admission of it, if it be only rightly viewed. On the contrary, the more various and thorough these corruptions were in those times, the more manifest is it that there must be something wonderfully vital in Christianity, since it could not only sustain itself, but make such memorable progress, even in such circumstances. If even then, it not only secured its ground, but went on "from conquering to conquer," what may not be expected from it when partaking of all the advantages which attach to its position in our own age? It is true, this fact carries with it evidence, that, great as may be the harm which ecclesiastical establishments have done to the Christian doctrine, there are other causes quite independent of that cause, which may operate in relation to such doctrines not less injuriously. In historical inquiries, it is always important to guard against mistaking the relations of mere time and place, for the relations of cause and effect. Evil or good may exist contemporaneously with an institution, and from that circumstance may be attributed to it, while in fact, it does not merely exist independently of the institute in question, but in defiance of much of its influence. If the fact as

regards the history of the corruptions of Christianity be such as we have stated, it cannot be ingenuous, it cannot be expedient, that we should hesitate to receive it? Ignorance on this point, whether the effect of a fond wilfulness, or of some other cause, must leave us in ignorance as to the value of those practical provisions by which the evil of such a state of things may be counteracted, or, it may be, prevented.

On the question relating to the extent in which the doctrines of Christianity were corrupted before the commencement of the fourth century, it should be almost enough that a reference be made to the excesses which we have seen as characterizing some of the early heresies, and to the dangerous and unscriptural speculations which we have already described as frequently met with in such writers as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, and as teeming in almost every page of Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen. A considerable exercise of candour is no doubt incumbent upon us when judging of the heresies of those times, on the ground that nearly all we know of them is from the report of enemies; but when every fair allowance is made on that ground, it will still appear, not only that they were extensively embraced by persons calling themselves Christians, but that they were of a nature which led to a rejection or corruption of every thing giving distinctiveness and value to the Christian system. And if we pass from the baseless theories of these pretended Christians, to a consideration of the state of theological opinion among the most orthodox, many deep traces of the same corruption continue to be observable.

In the writings of those Fathers who lived during this period, there are sufficient notices to show that they were believers in the doctrine of the Trinity; but notices, nevertheless, which indicate that their perceptions on this subject were often singularly confused and unsettled. To the admirers of anything like thorough Calvinism, these

ber period of his history, with errors of the nature just ıted. We may presume, also, that the agreement be- een him and his disciple Cyprian, would have been fficiently manifest, had not the works of the African artyr been so much restricted by circumstances to ques- ons of discipline and practical piety.*

It was reserved to the improved literature of the church ı the fourth and fifth centuries, and to the influence of ne Arian and Pelagian controversies, to restore, in a great neasure, those views of the Trinity, of the fallen state of nan, and of the doctrines of grace, which had been so far bscured and impaired by the dogmas of an antichristian hilosophy.† The statements adopted on these points in ynods and general councils after the close of the third ntury, may not have been in all respects such as inspired ıen would have put forth; but they were in much nearer nison with "the faith once delivered to the saints" than ould have been published by such assemblies before that me. Many of the old misconceptions were retained; thers were incorporated with them; and the whole as- umed a form which no doubt contributed to give per- ıetuity to the errors thus recognized as truths. But, as a vhole, the symbols of doctrine thus made public, were no mall improvement on the past. We have no hesitation, ccordingly, in saying, that we regard Justin Martyr as a orry guide on questions of theology, if compared with ugustine; and that we can spare the flights of Origen, vhen we have the more trustworthy intelligence of Jerome

* It was my intention, when first directing my thoughts to this subject, to ave supported the views expressed in the above paragraphs, relative to the tate of theological opinion in the first three centuries, by an ample reference o authorities: but I have since felt, that to cite the apposite passages on his topic would be to make a parade of quotations in support of views which ay now be regarded as established. Bishop Bull and Dr. Burton have nearly hausted the testimony of the Nicene and the Ante-Nicene Fathers on the ıbject.

† Augustin, Opera, Tom. VIII. in Psalm LIV.

quiry now before us must be in few words, and will be restricted to the influence of the ancient systems of philosophy on CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

The earliest systems of morality are found in the codes of legislators, where its rules are enforced with a simple reference to the general good, and on the assumption of their general obligation. But as civilization advances, these codes are enlarged, become more complex, and require to be applied by the most experienced wisdom. Thus the science of legislation is founded on the science of morals. Law is intended to operate as a terror to evil-doers, and as a praise to those who do well. The justice of attaching certain penalties to certain actions, is always determined by a previous estimate of the moral nature of such actions. It was in Greece, accordingly, where social polity was so much an object of study, that the subject of morals was first viewed as susceptible of exact and systematic treatment. In this science Socrates distinguished himself; and Aristotle brought to it a greater, and even a more practical sagacity. But here, as in other matters, it was the doctrine of Plato which chiefly influenced the opinions of the leading men in the Christian church, during several centuries.

The system of Plato, in this respect as in most respects, was derived mainly from that of Pythagoras, in which the Deity himself was regarded as the great standard of moral excellence, and the true end of human existence was said to consist in the nearest possible imitation of the conduct of the Supreme existence. Thus morality was a branch of theology, and could be perfect only as theological truth should be perfect. It will be seen that the foundation of this theory had less to do with what is known concerning the nature of man, than with what was assumed with respect to the nature of God. But concerning the nature of God, the Christian possessed revealed certainty; and the system which had become so prevalent while resting on con-

under consideration was, that the guidance of revealed truth, while professedly accepted, was not followed:—a false religion having been thrust into the place of the true, and the excesses of superstition allowed to entrench on what should have been regarded as an unquestionable authority in such matters.*

We have all heard of the distinctions made in school divinity between the comparative merits of a *contemplative* and an *active* life; and between what were called *mortal* and *venial* sins. It is well known, also, that in the same quarter, high moral attainment was often regarded as consisting in a mortifying of the flesh, more than in any wise discipline of the heart; and that, on the same principle, the ardour of a man's piety, was commonly determined by the number of his genuflexions and his prayers. Each of these errors had its portion of truth, and each had originated in some general tendency of human nature; but the root and power of them all must be ascribed to certain maxims of the ancient philosophy, which had become incorporated with Christianity.

Thus the heroic virtue so much lauded by the ancients, supplied the pattern of that spiritual ambition which seized so powerfully on many an ecclesiastical aspirant. In the former, as in the latter, the direct path to the object of pursuit, was in a separation from the calls of the flesh, and of ordinary affairs—in a triumph of the mental over the physical, of the future and the ideal over the present and the actual. We have found it to be the doctrine of

* This distinction has not, we conceive, been sufficiently attended to by Mr. Hampden, in his valuable Lectures on the Scholastic Philosophy. (Lect. VI.) It is, no doubt, true, that the attempts to found moral upon theological truth has been of serious injury to both. But this is no more than might be said of the connexion subsisting between many other things which nevertheless exist properly in relativeness to each other. If it be at all the object of revelation to supply a rule of duty, it is only reasonable to expect that it will give forth that rule, not only with *clearness*, but also with an *authority* and a *fulness* of its own.

Plato, that the soul should be assimilated to the Aut its being, so as to be in some sense identified with the same was the doctrine of Aristotle, and was u tatingly adopted by the church. It followed, however the excess to which this principle was carried, that th of man became severed, to a perilous extent, fro love of God; and that certain false imaginations abo future were indulged, so as to preclude all suitable gra and regard for the present. The abstract and the sp tive, took an ill-regulated precedence of the tangibl the ascertained. The most elevated life in all res was that which had least to do with mundane affairs. maxim rendered it necessary that there should b codes of morals, one for ordinary persons, exposed t ceaseless contaminations of the world, the other fo as aspired to the reputation of a kind of transcendent l sanctity. It is true, even ordinary persons were no cluded from the ultimate possession of this nobler k life; but it was the distinction of superior natures to r much of such a mode of existence even on earth, and consequence, to hold the things of earth, so valued by in general, in small esteem. It was in this sup energetic development of the faculties of the soul in tion to God, that the perfection of human natur believed to consist; and whatever neglect of ever duties, having reference to men only, was seen to from the impulses of this holy enthusiasm, or rathe mystic pietism, appeared only as a lesser duty whicl been dispensed with in favour of a greater. The ph pher had his tub, and the monk had his cell, and vocation was in substance the same. Had Christians attended to the admonition of their great Teacher, he says,—"This ought ye to have done, and not to left the other undone," their theology might have stre ened, but would never have impaired their philanth Nor would they have sought for the best evidence of pi

bodily exercise, or of morality in a mere crucifixion of the flesh. Paul exhorts men to be *instant in prayer*, and speaks of striving to *keep under the body*—but there is enough in his writings, and in his life, to suggest the restrictive sense in which such passages should be received.

And, unhappily, it was not enough that the notions of men, in regard to their duty to God, should be such as to produce, after this manner, a negligence of their duty to each other. Their mistakes on this point became productive of positive evils without number—of fanaticism, intolerance, and every evil work. The transition was easy, from such a view of religion as warranted a neglect of moral obligation, to such as would warrant the most direct infringement of it—as is seen in the broad fact, that the strongest evidence of moral worth, and of sincere piety, availed nothing in cases of alleged heresy, in the ages adverted to, if the one virtue of obedience to church dogmas and church authorities were wanting.

Well, also, would it be for the credit of our common faith, if the piety of our own day were more of that scriptural nature which forbids that a man should profess to love God, whom he hath not seen, while he loves not his brother, whom he hath seen. But, alas! the evils we have described as so rife in other days, have most of them proved hereditary, and still meet us in shapes but too nearly the same. Let us lay to heart the exhortation of the apostle, and endeavour to follow "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, let us think on these things."

wherever found, shaping itself to the varying circumstances of the mass of our species, whether civilized or barbarous —whether luxuriating on the soil of Asia, shut in amidst the forests of Germany, or thrown upon the frozen regions of the north.

In approaching this department of our subject, it may be proper to take a rapid view of the Paganism with which Christianity was to come in contact; we shall thus be prepared to mark the effect of those pre-established systems with regard to the Object and the Modes of Worship set forth in holy Scripture, and in relation to the Polity and the Morality which that authority has enjoined.

I. The works of the learned on the ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE ANCIENT IDOLATRY, are almost innumerable. It must be sufficient that we advert to a few of the more important of their representations.

We have ample proof that among the more enlightened men of antiquity, there was a general persuasion as to the existence of one Supreme Nature, to whom the popular divinities, and all created things, were in more or less immediate subjection. The *extent* in which this vestige of primeval truth was retained, is the only point open to debate. We know but too well, that this article was often grossly corrupted by those who professed to receive it; while by others, it was sometimes virtually, and sometimes openly, rejected. On the people generally, it produced little, if any, impression—the received notions in regard to the subordinate objects of worship, and the means of indulgence which that worship presented, being much more adapted to the thoughts and inclinations of the vulgar, than refined speculations on the unity or the supremacy of the Godhead.

Hence many agreed in doing homage to the heavenly bodies, and to the elemental powers, generally representing them by means of images, which in their form were other than human, because designed to exhibit objects

and beasts, and creeping things." Yes, and beyond this mystical homage toward the merely animate, as the emblem of something higher than itself, they have extended a similar reverence to the inanimate—to rivers, and lakes, and fountains, to hills and valleys, to groves and forests—all these being thus honoured as objects deemed sacred to certain imaginary beings who were supposed to preside over them.

The imagination so far freed from restraint, became a willing servant to inclination, whether of the body or the mind. The gods thus called into existence, shared in the vice and the feebleness of their votaries, being the reflections of human depravity, rather than models for human improvement. In the ideas thus presented, the sensual and the spiritual, the present and the future, were so mixed with each other, as to exhibit the appearance of a moral chaos:—or we may perhaps say, that it almost seemed as though devised for the very purpose of teaching men that the rewards proper to virtue, would be found allied with the sensuousness, the injustice, and the flagrant crime which had so long debased and afflicted the earth; for according to the system of idolatry which pervaded the ancient world, these propensities have not only a place in heaven, but are among the most conspicuous attributes of the very gods who preside there. The wonder accordingly is, not that the morals of the heathen world should have been such as we find them, but rather that they are not found to be still more corrupt.

The number of these deities, public and domestic, was beyond counting. In Egypt, they were said to be more numerous than the inhabitants; and the same might almost have been said of Rome when that city became the metropolis of the world. Indeed, the increase of the objects of worship, was generally proportioned to the advances of civilization—the multiplication of the wants of men, in their more artificial state of existence, begetting

a multiplication of these supposed almoners and protectors.

The priests, on whom devolved the care of the temples, and the superintendence of every thing relating to the worship of the gods, were not only a separate order of persons, but possessed important privileges. The terrors of superstition, which rendered them so powerful in most barbarous states, were commonly much softened in more civilized communities.* But generally, these persons attached to themselves the reputation of eminent sanctity, and were regarded as possessing a peculiar influence with the powers to whose service they were presumed to be devoted. Hence, with the proper office of the priest, which was to do honour to the gods by presenting sacrifices and offerings, the functions of a prophet were frequently associated, and sometimes those of magistracy. Every one has heard of the responses which priests affected to obtain from oracles, and of the pretensions to a knowledge of futurity which were made by Augurs and Aruspices; and the state of Druidism in the age of Cæsar and Lucan, is an instructive example of the secular, as well as spiritual domination, which a barbarian priesthood was sometimes permitted to exercise. Among the priests of antiquity, there was every gradation of authority. In Rome, especially, we ascend from the mere noviciate, to the college of pontiffs, and to the Pontifex Maximus. On that college it devolved to exercise a general superintendence over the matters included in the national worship. The Pontifex Maximus, is the designation which the pagan emperors were always proud to adopt. It is too obvious not to be perceived, that the existence of these functionaries did much to prepare the way for a college of cardinals, and a sovereign pontiff under other pretences.

We have adverted to the character of the objects of

* This exception occurs no where so observably as among the Greeks.—Heeren on Ancient Greece, c. iii.

worship among the nations of antiquity, and from the qualities attributed to these supposed existences, it would not be difficult to anticipate the kind of homage that would be rendered to them. Since to deprecate the wrath, or obtain the favour of these powers, would be the intention of every act of worship, the manner of approaching them would naturally be determined by the estimate formed of their character. As were the divinities, so would be the worship. Where ambition was presumed to be the characteristic, costly and obsequious services would be rendered. Where vanity was the ascendant passion, ostentatious ceremonies would be instituted. The impure would be worshipped by acts of impurity, and the malevolent would be propitiated by bloody sacrifices,—perhaps by human victims. In the popular divinities, the passions, infirmities, and vices of human nature were all prominent, but allied with power above law, and above the merely human. Hence the acts of worship, even among the most polished nations of antiquity, embraced not a little of that adulatory kind of homage with which tyrants are gratified: and beside including much that was frivolous and vain, they were frequently disgraced by the lowest sensualities, and sometimes by the most relentless cruelty. Very little did the forms of pagan worship present at all favourable to intellectual or moral culture. It is true, the almost uninterrupted recurrence of games and festivals was highly grateful to the people; but these, which were always most numerous in the most corrupt times, were adapted to beguile the multitude into a forgetfulness of every nobler pursuit, and were valued mainly from their tendency to dispose the people to contentment in subjection to their present masters, both civil and religious. The pomp and circumstance of these customs may have conduced, in so far as their attractiveness operated in the way of a patronage of science and genius, to some artificial improvement. But the splendour of an equipage does

Such, in brief, were the systems of Paganism with which primitive Christianity had to contend;—and they may be compared to the several departments of a vast citadel, strong in every means of defence which art or nature could supply, and which seemed to frown defiance on every possible mode of assault. It was an order of things wonderfully adjusted to act on the hopes and fears, on the natural tendencies, and even on the cultivated tastes of men, so as to make all these sources of energy and action tributary to its power. It could restrain by terror, or gratify by indulgence; and, while adapting itself to the lowest appetites of the multitude, could present suitable inducements to the more intellectual, the imaginative, and the ambitious. Where it failed to commend itself as true, it often obtained the credit of being useful, either as serving to strengthen some of the most important relations of society, or as giving the sanction of religion to so much of what an apostle describes as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." It had thus been moulded into a state of friendly agreement with the "course of this world." Hence it must not be expected to yield its place to the opposite influence of Christianity, but by slow degrees; everywhere making an obstinate resistance, and everywhere retaining no small influence over the religious character and manners, even of such as profess to have disowned its authority. The injury sustained by Christianity from this source, with respect to the OBJECT of worship, is the topic to which our attention must be restricted in the present Lecture.

II. Correct views of the Divine *nature*, constitute the only foundation of proper obedience to the Divine *will*. Hence, misconception with regard to the object of worship, must attach its consequences to our character and conduct. Until well instructed on the subject of the Divine perfections, we must continue incapable of judging as to the claims they possess on our homage and confidence; while false

views in this respect, will not only produce false impressions, but such error in principle will naturally lead to error in conduct. Men must *know God*, before they can *glorify him as God*:—and it is in this connexion between truth and goodness that we read the significance of the Redeemer's emphatic saying, "This is LIFE ETERNAL, to KNOW thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

The contrast between the great object of worship made known in Holy Scripture, and the gods of ancient heathenism, suggests the most humiliating conclusions as to the present condition of human nature. Those fictitious existences, whom all men delighted to honour, were of different character in different regions; the diversities in this respect being clearly the effect of mere circumstances, such as climate, country, and the state of society, as affecting the worshippers. But in the history of these modifications, we see little else than the history of so many readjustments of the old elements. The change is rarely an advance towards truth. Outbreaks from the more beaten path were not unfrequent, but they were too commonly in a wrong direction, only serving to vary the forms of error. The deities of civilized states were less barbarian in character than those of savage tribes; but they were as much wanting in good faith, and more luxurious, more sensuous—the vices of barbarism having given place to others belonging to a state of more refined worldliness and selfishness.

It should be added, moreover, that, as the gods of different nations became, in this manner, the offspring and reflection of national character, so the separate deities of each nation possessed the properties by which they were distinguished, as the effect of the particular tendencies or temperament dominant in certain classes of the communities in which they were acknowledged. For while there are causes which give a character to nations, there are others which produce considerable modifications of that

general character in the classes, both larger and smaller, of which every nation is composed:—and the process by which the gods of every people have been so readily assimilated to the likeness of their worshippers, extends itself below the mass, and fails not to meet the particular cravings of an Alexander or a Diogenes, adapting its results, with equal ease, to the self-denial of one man, and the self-indulgence of another.

It is impossible, therefore, that we should judge comprehensively or justly with regard to the danger to which revealed truth on the subject of the Divine nature was exposed in its conflict with the errors of heathenism, if we regard those errors merely in the light of certain speculative opinions, capriciously adopted, and as capriciously retained. On the contrary, these false views must be seen as having their origin in the strong—the overruling tendencies, either natural or acquired, of the people and the classes by whom they are maintained. Beside the difficulty of inducing men to abandon opinions once openly avowed, and consecrated as the faith of their predecessors, there was the far greater difficulty arising from the alliance of these opinions with personal inclinations—inclinations that would be sacrificed as reluctantly as *a right hand or a right eye*. Hence, when the ancient heathen were called upon to receive the gospel, it was not merely a change of creed that was demanded, but a change of character. The change insisted on was not so much speculative as practical; the renunciation of their gods, being only a formal act, expressive of the most difficult of all achievements—the denial of themselves!

In those times, nothing was presumed to have been ascertained, except as matter of plausible conjecture, concerning the Infinite Nature supposed to preside over the popular divinities. The Athenian altar, with its inscription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, is sufficient evidence of this fact. The uncertainty of every known conception on this mo-

not along with the supposed principles of Natural ligion.

Of the force with which the first of these tendencies— tendency to make the human character the model and asure of the Divine—would operate, we may judge from marked effects which are constantly resulting from it hin our own observation. We find our contempora- generally solicitous that the evidence on the side of nions which lend a sanction to their favourite inclina- s should appear strong and decisive; and to this object essential that they should succeed in persuading them- ves that there is nothing in the Divine nature repugnant such opinions. Thus temperaments and habits, which their first influence do so much to determine their inions in relation to duty, in the next stage of their in- ence are not less potent in determining the opinions opted concerning the Being whose will is the great rule duty. Some exception, of course, must be made here, reference to those whose opinions are formed under a ivine guidance, along with Holy Scripture. But even in ch cases, exception can be only in part; for how large is e admixture of folly, and, we may add, of grave delusion, anifest in the conceptions even of these persons, and evi- ently proceeding from the source now under considera- on!

If the depravity, or, to use a more expressive term, the *ungodliness* of human nature, has this influence in dis- posing men to corrupt the truth amidst the many advan- ages peculiar to our age and country, we may conjecture what its effect would be amidst the great comparative dis- advantages of the heathen multitudes who became early converts to the faith of the gospel. If the creed of the majority professing Christianity now, be a matter moulded according to their wishes or their tastes, more than accord- ing to evidence,—so that, in some instances, the clemency of the Most High is made to act so as to preclude the

exercise of any other moral attribute; while, in the view of others, his mercy, if put forth at all, is restricted to the smallest possible development, his glory being connected almost exclusively with the wide and ever-withering desolations of his wrath;—if, in a word, there can scarcely be a conception of Deity so extravagant or absurb, as not to find its zealous defenders among the men and women of our time, what might we not fear, in respect to those professors of Christianity in distant ages, the great majority of whom never saw a Bible except in the hand of a preacher, who, had that volume been placed before them, would have been incapable of deciphering its contents; and who, in addition to the depravity common to mankind, had formed their habits of thought, of sympathy, and of action, under the influence of scenes and usages in nearly all respects directly anti-christian? Of such a people might we not in truth say, that, as were the gods whom they had worshipped in their heathenism, so, in too many respects, and in too large a measure, would be the object of their worship, even when they had learnt to say, "What have we any more to do with idols?" With that large proportion whose assumption of the Christian name would be the effect of social influence merely, this result followed as a matter of course; and but too much of the same leaven would assuredly remain, even in those who were influenced, upon the whole, by a devout sincerity, in their new vocation.

From these firmly rooted prepossessions, the popular apprehension would be materially influenced in relation to the point of which we have just spoken, viz. the respective claims of the Divine justice and mercy. As paganism had taught the barbarian mind to regard the Deity in the light of the heroic leader; and the civilized mind to view the powers presiding over human affairs as no less inclined towards luxurious indulgences than mortals themselves; so, on becoming merely nominal Christians, the new object of veneration introduced would be regarded by such men,

s in some measure partaking of the attributes which they ad been wont to look upon as the glory of the old. Many f the early Christians saw this course of things, and pro- ested against it; not a few of them proceeding to the ength of refusing to bear arms under any circumstances, hat they might place themselves at the farthest remove rom those who would confound the God of the Scriptures vith the war-gods whom the nations had set up. While thers strove to counteract the ensnaring force of the ocial affections, and of the senses generally, by escaping nto solitude, and by the severest discipline in the way of bstinence and self-denial. Both these parties erred by xcess on the one hand, as the consequences of an ill- egulated opposition to the errors into which the greater umber of avowed Christians had fallen on the other. Of his greater number, the one part would have made Chris- ianity subserve the views and enterprises of men who delight in war; and the other part would have made its spirit and maxims conformable with the character and manners of such as seek no better portion than the poor indulgences of a sensual life. The reign of Charlemagne, and the subsequent history of the Crusades, afford suffi- cient illustration of the ease with which the passions and the imagination of men can assimilate the revealed cha- racter of Deity to the Mars of one region, or the Odin of nother; while the marked ascendancy of every sort of icentiousness through many centuries, though the nations of Europe were loud in their professions as good Chris- tians, is a further evidence of the readiness with which humanity can exclude every purer and nobler view of the Divine nature, as the consequence of its determined pre- ference of the present to the future, of the sensual to the spiritual.

It appears, then, as the sum of our statement on this point, that, while the Divine nature, as revealed in Scripture, is consistent and the same, men are ever disposed to look

partially on this transcendent exhibition of it, and n
to exaggerate such of its aspects as may be most
able to their inclinations and their tastes, but to ov
or wholly to exclude, whatever it may include tha
not so commend itself to their approval. The res
that the nature of the Divine Being is not only diffe
the view of one professedly Christian man, from wh
in the view of another; but that often the one is the
contradiction of the other; and, what is more, tha
are frequently at an equal remove from the truth. I
statement, little more is affirmed than that the tend
which led men into the errors of paganism, have con
to operate, so as to produce a mixture of those erro
their better faith as Christians. What the weaker an
vicious forms of paganism were, in comparison wit
is meant by the terms, Natural Religion—that the
forms of Christianity may be said to be, in comparis
the Christianity of Holy Writ; and the causes whi
duced so memorable a deterioration of the former, s
those which have operated with the same effect up
latter. The purpose of revelation, so far as concer
present life, is to *assist* and to *amend* human nature,
perfect it.

But the influence of paganism with respect to
vealed character of God, is not its only, and perha
its most injurious effect in reference to the proper
of worship. It has taught men to believe that, bes
One glorious Being revealed in Scripture, there are
to whom worship should be rendered. These, it is
ted, possess subordinate claims only, because posse
no more than delegated power; but even these, it
sisted, are properly entitled to the most formal
adoration. In proportion to the elevation or abst
of the conceptions which men have formed with
to the Supreme Existence, has generally been the
citude, that the impression of the awful distance

separates between their own insignificance and so much greatness, should be in some way softened and diminished. In this exigency of human feeling, the expedient which has every where presented itself, we see in the intervention of other powers, richly endowed perhaps, but possessing more in common with what pertains to the character and the present lot of humanity. Men have ever been disposed to give personality to the objects of their worship, and in doing so have always taken humanity as their model. The worship of pure abstractions has been limited to a comparatively small portion of our race; the general disposition has been to humanize the supernatural as much as possible, even to the extent of attributing to it the infirmities and vices of our present condition of existence. It is to this feeling, more than to any other cause, that we have to ascribe the prevalence of creature-worship. It is to such worship that the habits of the reflecting and the heedless alike tend, if strangers to an inspired guidance. The degree in which men have risen in their conceptions of the infinite and the morally perfect, has generally been the degree in which they have found it difficult to suppose that the affairs of human life, usually so trivial, so low, and so evil, are really subject to the immediate superintendence of such a power. On the other hand, where there has not been capacity to rise to any adequate thought concerning a transcendent and purely spiritual nature, nothing has been left to call forth the imperishable sympathies of the human mind with the invisible, in some one or other of its forms, except certain passing phantoms of humanized being.

Hence, it was the work of paganism to people every region of earth and heaven, and even the realms beneath, with natures participating in the strength and weakness, and in the good and evil, which we find to be inseparable from human nature. From the great Jove himself, to the meanest household god, an immense gradation was per-

ceived, every space of which was filled up in the v
of the pagan worshipper. Male and female, youth
age, parent and child, all the relations of human
and all the varieties of human character, and of hu
achievement, were among the things which gave tc
popular system of theology its texture and complete
By the agency of these different powers,—which exte
itself, not only to the great and small in the secre
nature, and the movements of providence on the e
but to the invisible regions,—the hand of the great Cr
was wholly excluded, and men were taught to live "wit
God in the world."

Now that a state of things in all material points
counterpart of what we have just described has had e
ence, and continues to exist, in connexion with the
fession of Christianity, is as little questionable as
fact in history, or any matter of daily observation.
countries subject to the sway of Romanism, the sh
of the Virgin, and of a multitude of saints, have s
engrossed the homage of the people, as to leave no r
for any proper dependence on the One Mediator, an
shut out the mass of the community from all atte
toward any immediate worship of the Nature whic
proclaimed as "Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible."
that this resemblance might be entire, wanting notl
these new divinities are all visibly represented by m
of paintings or images, before which their votaries
down to worship; by whose agency miracles are sai
be wrought, and about whose shrines, after the s
pagan model, an abundance of votive offerings ma
seen, setting forth the gratitude of parties professin
have been recipients of miraculous benefits.

"The noblest heathen temple now remaining in
world," says Dr. Middleton,* "is the Pantheon, or

* Letter from Rome.

tunda, which, as the inscription over the portico informs us, having been impiously dedicated of old, by Agrippa, to Jove and all the gods, was piously consecrated by St. Boniface the Fourth to the blessed Virgin and all Saints. With this single alteration, it serves as exactly for all the purposes of the popish, as it did for the pagan worship, for which it was built. For as in the old temple, every one might find the god of his country, and address himself to that deity whose religion he was most devoted to, so it is the same thing now; every one chooses the patron whom he likes best, and one may see here different services going on at the same time at different altars, with distinct congregations around them, just as the inclinations of the people lead them to the worship of this or that particular saint.

"And as it is in the Pantheon, so is it in all the other heathen temples that still remain in Rome; they have only pulled down one idol to set up another, and changed rather the name than the object of their worship. Thus the little temple of Vesta, near the Tiber, mentioned by Horace, is now possessed by the Madonna of the Sun; that of the Fortuna Virilis, by Mary the Egyptian; that of Saturn (where the public treasure was anciently kept) by St. Adrian; that of Romulus and Remus, in the Via Sacra, by two other brothers, Cosmas and Damianus; that of Antonine the Godly by Laurence the Saint.

"At the foot of Mount Palatin, in the way between the Forum and the Circus Maximus, on the very spot where Romulus was believed to have been suckled by the wolf, there stands another little round temple, dedicated to him in the early times of the republic, into which, from the present elevation of the soil without, we now descend by a great number of steps. It is mentioned by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who says that, in his time, there stood in it a brazen statue, of antique work, of the wolf giving suck to the infant brothers, which is thought by many to be the

same which is still preserved and shown in the Capitol. From the tradition of the wonderful escape which Romulus had in this very place, when exposed in his infancy to perish in the Tiber, as soon as he came to be a god, he was looked upon as singularly propitious to the health and safety of young children; from which notion it became a practice for nurses and mothers to present their sickly infants before his shrine in this little temple, in confidence of a cure or relief by his favour. Now, when this temple was converted afterwards into a church, lest any piece of superstition should be lost, or the people think themselves sufferers by the change, in losing the benefit of such a protection for their children, care was taken to find out, in the place of the heathen god, a Christian saint, who had been exposed too in his infancy, and found by chance, like Romulus, and for the same reason might be just as fond of children as their old deity had been: and thus the worship paid to Romulus, being now transferred to Theodorus, the old superstition still subsists, and the custom of presenting children at this shrine continues to this day without intermission; of which I myself have been a witness, having seen, as oft as I looked into this church, ten or a dozen women, decently dressed, each with a child in her lap, sitting with silent reverence before the altar of the saint, in expectation of his miraculous influence on the health of the infant.

"But their temples," continues the same writer, "are not the only places where we see the proofs and overt acts of their superstition; the whole face of the country has the visible characters of paganism upon it; and wherever we look about us, we cannot but find, as St. Paul did at Athens, clear evidence of its being possessed by a superstitious and idolatrous people. The old Romans, we know, had their gods, who presided peculiarly over the roads, streets, and highways, called Viales, Semitales, Compitales; whose little temples or altars, decked with flowers, or whose statues,

at least, coarsely carved of wood or stone, were placed at convenient distances in the public ways, for the benefit of travellers, who used to step aside to pay their devotions to these rural shrines, and beg a prosperous journey, and safety in their travels. Now this custom prevails still so generally in all popish countries, but especially in Italy, that one can see no other difference between the old and present superstition, than that of changing the name of the deity, and christening, as it were, the old *Hecate in triviis*, by the new name of *Maria in trivia*, by which title I have observed one of their churches dedicated in this city; and as the heathens used to paint over the ordinary statues of their gods with red, or some such gay colour, so I have oft observed the coarse images of these saints so daubed over with a gaudy red as to resemble exactly the description of the god Pan in Virgil:—

Sanguineis ebuli baccis minioque rubentem.—*Ecl.* x.

"In passing along the road, it is common to see travellers on their knees before these rustic altars, which none ever presume to approach without some act of reverence; and those who are most in haste, or at a distance, are sure to pull off their hats, at least, in token of respect.

"But what gave me still the greater notion of the superstition of these countries, was to see those little oratories, or rural shrines, sometimes placed under the cover of a tree or grove, agreeably to the descriptions of the old idolatry, in the sacred as well as profane writers, or more generally raised on some eminence, or, in the phrase of Scripture, on high places, the constant scene of idolatrous worship in all ages; it being an universal opinion among the heathens, that the gods in a peculiar manner loved to reside on eminences or tops of mountains; which pagan notion prevails still so generally with the Papists, that there is hardly a rock or precipice, how dreadful or diffi-

cult soever of access, that has not an oratory, or al crucifix at least, planted on the top of it.

"Among the rugged mountains of the Alps, ver to a little town called Modana, there stands, on the a rock, a chapel, with a miraculous image of Our which is visited with great devotion by the peopl sometimes, we were told, by the king himself; bei mous, it seems, for a miracle of a singular kind, v restoring of dead-born children to life; but so far o to make them capable of baptism, after which they expire."

One more extract from this memorable Letter l Middleton must suffice on the point now under our n —"When we enter their towns," he observes, "th is still the same as it was in the country; we find where the same marks of idolatry, and the same rea make us fancy that we are still treading pagan gr whilst at every corner we see images and altars, with or candles burning before them, exactly answering descriptions of the ancient writers, and to what Tert reproaches the heathen with, that their streets, thei kets, their baths, were not without an idol. But, all, in the pomp and solemnity of their holidays, and cially their religious processions, we see the genui mains of heathenism, and proof enough to convince u this is still the same Rome which old Numa first and civilized by the arts of religion; who, as Plutarch 'by the institution of supplications and processions gods, which inspire reverence, whilst they give pleas the spectators, and, by pretended miracles and divine ritions, reduced the fierce spirits of his subjects und power of superstition.'"

It may occur to some minds, that in the tone of remarks, the writer betrays somewhat of the asperity controversialist. Their substantial accuracy, howe not to be impeached. The same ground has beer

recently traversed by an author, who, in giving the result of his observations to the world, expresses himself "afraid lest that should be taken for a polemical, which was only intended for a literary essay." But notwithstanding the greater urbanity, and, perhaps, the greater candour, of the production thus introduced, its effect is only to give more detail and completeness to what the "Letter from Rome" had previously supplied on the same subject—showing that the lapse of another century in the history of European civilization, has left Italy strictly in its old position as to religion.

"As I descended from the Alps," says the author of 'Vestiges of Ancient Manners and Customs in Italy,' "I was admonished of my entrance into Italy by a little chapel to the Madonna, built upon a rock by the road side; and from that time till I repassed this chain of mountains, I received almost hourly proof that I was wandering amongst the descendants of that people which is described by Cicero to have been the most religious of mankind. Though the mixture of religion with all the common events of life is anything but an error, yet I could not avoid regretting that, like their heathen ancestors, the modern Italians had supplied the place of one great Master mover by a countless host of inferior agents. The multiplication of gods, in the first instance, may seem to have arisen from the incorrect idea which unassisted reason was likely to form of the Deity, by transferring to the powers of the unseen world the same qualities and imperfections which belong to the noblest of visible animals—the passions and infirmities of helpless man. For as the human individual can but accomplish a limited number of actions; limited by his disposition to do good or evil; by his bodily and mental capacities; by space and time; so did it become necessary that the gods, who were thought to labour under the same difficulties, though not in the same degree, should be proportionally multiplied. Thus to

been tempted to lay under heavy contribution the credulity of the public; and accordingly we find most cathedrals, as well as nearly all the chapels of the regular clergy, possessed of images or relics said to be endowed with miraculous virtues, while a box is at hand to receive the offerings of those who, out of gratitude for the past, or hope for the future, are disposed to give their mite for the good of the church. I have seen the poor fishermen at Catania regularly greeted, on their arrival at the coast, with the produce of their day's toils, by the craving voice of a Capuchin or Franciscan; nor has that been refused to the holy vagrant which ordinary beggars, though wrung with distress, would have sought in vain. Indeed, few persons are so poor as to escape subscribing their quota towards filling the satchels of these men, or so fearless of the consequent anger of heaven, as to risk a denial.

"The general effects of this unhappy system have been, to degrade the worship of the Deity—to swell the calendar with saints—to extend the influence of charms—to instigate pilgrimages—to clothe the altars with votive tablets—and to give currency to the numbers of miracles, which have not a shadow of testimony to their truth. In short, it has made the countries of Italy and Sicily what they are, emblems of the churches in them, replete themselves with beauty, yet serving as vast magazines for objects calculated to excite the devotion of the superstitious, the pity of the wise and good, and the scoffs of the profane."*

The writer who thus expresses himself, then proceeds to a fuller description and comparison, commencing with the very fertile subject—the *saints* and saint-worship. These objects of worship, considered as regards their numbers, their reputed lives, the places and objects over which they preside, their miraculous powers, and in some

* Blunt's Vestiges of Ancient Manners and Customs discoverable in Modern Italy and Sicily, pp. 1—6.

other particulars, are shown to bear "a wonderful resemblance to the gods of old Rome." The complaint of Juvenal, that the gods had become too numerous for Atlas himself to bear, is shown to be one no less applicable to the saints by whom those gods have been thrust from their ascendancy; while the fabulous interviews between Diana and Endymion, between Bacchus and Ariadne, between Venus and Adonis, and many more of the pagan divinities, are also shown to have their parallels, in not a few respects, in the impious tales generally believed concerning certain miraculous appearances said to have been vouchsafed by the Divine Redeemer to several female devotees. The high places and fountains, so sacred to ancient paganism, continue, as stated by Middleton, to be no less so to modern catholicism; and while not only every nation and province, but every city and town, has its guardian saint, the system is exhibited as extending itself, according to the ancient model, to every house, and almost to every apartment. "The prodigious number of small images and household gods which are still in existence," says the writer last cited, "shows the extent to which they were adopted in the domestic system of the Romans: for them a corner was reserved in their principal living-rooms; and I scarcely remember a single house or shop in Pompeii in which there is not a niche for their reception. To this day, then, the shops and houses of Italy and Sicily are no less scrupulously provided with a figure or painting of a Madonna, or saint, whose good offices it is not unusual further to propitiate by keeping a lamp burning before them without intermission."*

The remarks of this intelligent author on the causes which have led to the idolatrous homage so commonly paid to the Virgin Mother in Catholic countries, and

* Pp. 7—25.

especially in Italy, are so relevant to the main object of these Lectures, that I must venture to extract them.

"Few phenomena in the Christian world," says Mr. Blunt, "have seemed to me more extraordinary, than that the Madonna should have usurped, in all Catholic countries, but particularly in Italy and Sicily, so much of that reverence which is only due to the three persons of the Trinity. To pay such respect to the memory of the mother of our Lord as we owe to a creature selected by the Spirit of God for the mysteries of the incarnation, is highly proper; and by the better informed Catholics, perhaps such respect is all that is offered. At the same time, none can be so blind as not to perceive that the honours assigned to Madonna by the Italians in general, are of a very different description. Are they in danger? upon her they call for help. Have they experienced any signal deliverance? to her influence it is ascribed. The most splendid of their processions are dedicated to her glory; the oaths they utter in conversation are commonly in her name; their first exclamation of wonder or of grief is, *Santa Maria!* Whence does all this proceed? Perhaps it is only to be accounted for by the nature of the religion of ancient Rome. It may be remarked that Gentilism comprehended a vast variety of female deities, some of which were not less powerful, nor less the objects of propitiation and prayer, nor placed in a lower rank in the scale of divinity, than the greatest of the gods of the other sex. On the contrary, the superiority of females was established in Egypt as a civil and religious institution, and the same order is observed in Plutarch's Treatise of Isis and Osiris.* A precedence thus given to the female deities in Egypt would probably have its operation in Italy also; a proposition of which no person will entertain much doubt who has observed the proportion which

* Vide Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 103, *note.*

the gods of the Nile bear in every museum of Italian antiquities, to those of Greece and Rome. Indeed, when Isis and Serapis were united in one temple in the capital of Italy, priority of place was assumed by the queen. It is natural, therefore, to suppose that mankind, long retaining a propensity to relapse into idolatry, would endeavour to find some substitute for an important class of beings, which had for so many years exercised undisputed empire over the minds and passions of men who, from climate and temperament, were perhaps peculiarly disposed to render the fair portion of the inhabitants of heaven a chivalrous obedience. The religion of Christianity, however, as it was taught by our Saviour and his immediate followers, afforded no stock on which this part of heathen mythology could be grafted. None of the three persons of the Trinity could, without much effort, be moulded into the form of a goddess: and the circumstance, that some ancient heretics actually did maintain the Holy Ghost to be a female, only serves to show the reluctance with which mankind bade adieu to that sex as an object of worship. On the other hand, the Virgin presented such an opportunity as could hardly escape the penetration of any age, much less of one which could call 'Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.' And, indeed, we find that a sect of persons named Colyridians arose amongst the Arabians before the end of the fourth century, who offered cakes to the Virgin Mary as a goddess, and the Queen of Heaven.* When we consider, therefore, on the one side, the natural disposition of converts from Paganism to mingle and confound the religion they had quitted with that they had espoused; and, on the other, the willingness which sincere but ill-judging Christians, such as Gregory Thaumaturgus, displayed to come to an accommodation with the pagans,

* Vide Jortin's Eccles. Rem. Vol. I. p. 332.

in hopes that time and improved knowledge might lead them to a purer faith;* we shall not be surprised to find that many of the rites, and much of the reverence, which attached to several of the female deities of old, should have been concentrated in favour of the Madonna. An error so likely to arise in the common course of things, was, perhaps, confirmed by the title of Θεοτοκὸς, and Mater Dei, which was assigned to the Virgin without scruple, till the famous Nestorian controversy brought the subject into debate, and occasioned the council of Ephesus, in 428, which, after all, decided that the terms might be used with propriety.

"As this epithet in pagan times was applied to Cybele, and as that goddess, from her primitive regard for the ancestors of the Romans,

(Iliacas Mater amavit opes—
Ilium, the mighty Mother ever loved,)

was held in peculiar honour in the capital of the world, and celebrated there with a magnificence agreeable to the importance of her character—

Illa Deos peperit . . . . cessere parenti,
Principiumque dati mater honoris habet,
Ov. *Fast.* IV. 360.

The gods she bore—to her the immortal race
Resigned the honours of the foremost place,

so does it seem almost inevitable that some confusion in the minds of half-enlightened persons would ensue, in consequence of so singular an identity of name."†

Mr. Blunt further remarks, on the connexion between the ancient pagan custom of begging for "the mother of the gods," and the very general modern practice of begging "for the Madonna." "And there is," he adds, "yet another coincidence equally singular. Our Lady Day, or the Day of the Blessed Virgin of the Roman Catholics,

* Vide Suicer. verb. εἰκὼν. † Pp. 47—52.

was heretofore dedicated to Cybele. It was called 'Hilaria,' says Macrobius, 'on account of the joy occasioned by the arrival of the equinox, when the light was about to exceed the darkness in duration:' and from the same author, as well as from Lampridius, it appears that it was a festival of the Mater Deum. Moreover, in a Greek commentary upon Dionysius, cited by Dempster, in his Roman Antiquities, it is asserted, 'that the Hilaria was a festival in honour of the mother of the gods, which was proper to the Romans."*

Now this state of things, so assuredly prevalent in Italy, is in substance that which history exhibits as common to Christendom during many centuries. It would not be unprofitable, did our limits admit, to trace these corruptions of the Christian doctrine concerning the only proper object of worship, historically, and with some minuteness, from the partial indications of them among the early Christians, to their ultimate development at a much later period. But in the place of such an inquiry, a few brief notices must suffice.

That errors of this nature should have been adopted by avowed believers in Christianity, when the Christian profession began to present a path to worldly emolument and honour, is not inexplicable. But it must not be concealed, that many of these vain imaginations, and some even of the most extravagant among them, began to make their appearance long before the church became allied with any secular power. It was while persecution raged against all men calling themselves Christians, while they rarely seemed to be secure from the captivity of the mines, or the fury of the lions, as the consequence of their religious character, that the name of Christianity became connected with doctrines including much more than the germ of every subsequent corruption as to the direction

* Vide Dempster. Antiq. Roman. Annot. ad. c. iv.

that should be given by mankind to their religious feelings and services.

The work intitled "The Shepherd of Hermas," has its place with the epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, as they are called; and according to Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, it was generally regarded by the early Christians as a work of the Hermas named by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. The more critical attention bestowed on such productions in the third century, particularly in the Latin division of the church, was fatal to the apostolic and inspired pretensions of this document, and diminished its credit considerably in other respects. The author was not, as we believe, the Hermas mentioned by St. Paul, but a brother of Pius, who, in the second century, was bishop of the church in Rome. "The design of the author," says Mosheim, "manifestly was, to lead men to believe that his book was not a merely human composition, but derived, either mediately or immediately, from God himself. But it contains such an admixture of folly and superstition with piety; such a puerile association of the most extravagant nonsense with things of a better quality, not only in the celestial visions which form the substance of the first book, but also in the precepts and parables which are put into the mouth of the angel and others; as to make it wonderful that learned men should ever have spoken of Hermas as an inspired writer. To me, it is sufficiently plain that he must have been an egregious fanatic; or else, as is most probable, a man who, in order the better to obtain the attention of his brethren to instructions deemed by him important, conceived himself justified in affecting a converse with the Divine Being, and superior spiritual natures."*

Thus far Mosheim:—but it is to be especially observed, in relation to this subject, that the mixture of folly and superstition which has called forth this merited repro-

* Mosheim, De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum Primus, sect. 54.

bation, consists, in a great degree, of the introduction of saints and angels as celestial visions; as achieving the most fantastic miracles, for the purpose of imparting symbolical instruction; and, in fact, in the use of a machinery adapted to convey just those impressions of creature, or delegated agency, in the government of human affairs, which had always so conspicuous a place in the framework of paganism, and which so soon became the acknowledged doctrine of the church. Throughout this somewhat extended production, the Deity, and even the Mediator, are so distantly, and so very rarely adverted to, amidst the obtrusive doings and pretensions of inferior natures, as to seem to be almost forgotten—the created precluding the uncreated; angels being described as those "to whom the Lord has delivered all his creatures, to frame and build them up, and to rule over them." Yet this work, which is hardly more exceptionable on this point than in its theology and morality throughout, was wont to be read, for some centuries from the time of its publication, in the services of the church, through the East, along with the canonical Scriptures! By the greater number, in every large auditory, it would no doubt be listened to as an inspired document. The inferences to be deduced from this fact, with regard to the sort of piety which had obtained at that time both among the clergy and laity, are many and obvious. The picture it presents is, in all respects, that of "the blind leading the blind." Such views of the commerce taking place between the earthly and the heavenly, approached the very threshold of idolatry, and left comparatively little to be done when the time came for establishing festivals in honour of the Angels and of All Saints.

We have seen enough of human nature in the course of our present inquiries, to be aware that this descent from the exalted theism of revelation, to the worship of lower natures, possessing more in common with ourselves, was

always to be feared. It is true, revelation itself has taught us that angels "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation;" and that we have to wrestle, not merely with "flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness in high places." But how guarded, and how rational, are all the intimations that occur on topics of this nature in the inspired writings, when compared with such machinery as devised by man! Such natures, when they have appeared as the inventions of the human mind, have never failed to occupy, in effect, the place of the Supreme Nature; and either from gratitude or fear, men have rendered to them the homage due only to the great Source of all good. In the Scriptures, the loftiest seraph is declared to be no more than a fellow-servant with mortal men; and Apollyon himself is a foe who only needs to be resisted to be vanquished. Thus the motives to idolatry, from whatever source they spring, and to whatever refinement they may be subject, are all alike precluded. In this system, it is with the immediate hand of God that we have especially to do, and not with a host of intermediate agencies; and it is with him, accordingly, that our religious thoughts and aspirations are to be mainly conversant: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The earliest form, perhaps, in which creature-worship presents itself in the page of ecclesiastical history, is in that undue estimate of angelic influence which we have noticed as so manifest in the work of Hermas. Its next step was in an ill-regulated judgment of the same kind concerning the merit of any unusual appearance of devotion among believers, especially if characterized by much physical self-denial, and by a renunciation of all part in the ordinary affairs of life. But the saint of the wilderness was not so revered an object as the saint of the dungeon; and the

loftiest honour was reserved for those who were called t add the glory of the martyr to that of the confessor. Thes men of heroic virtue were allowed, while living,—as w have intimated—to procure a suspension of the ordinar rules of discipline in favour of their weaker brethren; and when dead, a sanctity was attached to their bodies, to thei places of interment, and to their dying sayings, or the compositions that survived them, which prepared the way for still greater error.

The practice of making the tombs of the martyrs the scene of special acts of devotion, owed its prevalence t this feeling, as well as to the heathen notion which regarded the spirits of the departed as in more or les intercourse with the earth, and the spot where their bodie happened to be deposited, as being always their favourit resort. From this state of mind, the transition was no difficult into that which led to the treasuring up of relic to the invocation of the beings thus numbered with th dead; to a belief in their merit and prevalence as inte cessors, and in their peculiar guardianship, as exercised i behalf of the individuals and communities who wer forward to do them honour, by erecting shrines an churches to their memory; and, finally, to the inventio of the monstrous dogma, which exhibited this favoure class of persons as having acquired a greater stock c merit than was needed for their own salvation, from whic to administer for the salvation of others! So early as th fifth century, all these excesses, except the last, had becom common to the whole church; even the images of th saints being general objects of worship, and regarded, i some cases, in the true spirit of paganism, as partaking of kind of animated existence, in consequence of some peculia presence in them of the spirits they were designed t represent—a presence realized by the prayers of the worshipper, and more assuredly by those of the priest Nothing remained but that these images should possess

the power of working miracles; and in the course of time, this, as we have seen, was not wanting.

Well would it have been if the Christians of the second, and some following centuries, instead of yielding to this degenerate course of things, had duly considered the new position of mankind in their relation to their Maker and the universe, as brought to light by the gospel—a position in which man is taken out of the hands of the creature, and placed directly in the hands of his Creator. But with the book before them, which said of all creature-worship, "See thou do it not," they fell from their proper liberty, and became the victims of a degrading and richly merited bondage.

Nor was this all. As these innovations were contrary to Holy Scripture, they were not to be vindicated by any ingenuous appeal to that authority. Thus a necessity was created for setting up some false authority in the place of the true; and this was too soon found, in that undefined, mysterious power, to which the name of the CHURCH was applied. Such an authority, set up for such a purpose, would become the ready inlet to a multitude of similar delusions.

It should be observed, moreover, that the degree of fondness with which these fancies were indulged, would determine the solicitude cherished, and, if needed, the effort made in their favour. The secret consciousness, too, that they were matters but feebly, if at all, supported by the inspired records, which must often have existed, could not fail to give a character of harshness and dogmatism to the manner of defending them. Hence the importance so soon attached to church decisions on topics of this description, and hence the intolerance with which such decisions came to be enforced. The fear of loss will always be proportioned to the desire of possession; and men will generally become dogmatic, and the partisans of authority and intolerance, in the degree in which they

feel that it would not be safe to confide in more legitimate weapons. It is a hazardous season, not only to every thing ingenuous, but to every thing humane, when men become pledged, and in some degree wittingly, to a bad cause.

Nor must it be supposed in this instance, any more than in many others which have come under our notice, that the tendencies which were so injurious to Christianity in distant ages, are of a description in which we have little if any concern. The influences in this respect, which were so powerful in other days, still exist; and though operating under some modification, are still leading multitudes to destruction. When mankind shall cease to be what they have hitherto been, darkened in understanding, and depraved in heart, their views in regard to the proper object of worship will be enlarged, and free from misconception. But in the mean time, the measure in which they are subject to such evils, must be the extent in which they will be deficient in respect to the true knowledge of God. The causes which dispose men to assimilate the character of the Almighty to their own, are inseparable from the present state of human nature; and the paganism which affected the theology of our remote precursors in the Christian profession, is not without its influence on our own notions and sentiments, though operating along the distance of many generations. Our prayer accordingly should ever be, that He "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness would shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ;" that we may not be influenced by "the spirit which is of the world, but by the Spirit which is of God, and so may know the things which are freely given to us of God."

LECTURE IX.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE INFLUENCE OF ANCIENT PAGANISM.

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv. 23.

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."—JOHN xviii. 36.

IN the last Lecture we were occupied with a review of ancient paganism, and with an inquiry as to the effect of the pagan systems of antiquity on the faith of Christians in relation to the proper object of worship. In the present Lecture, we are to examine the influence of those systems on the Worship, Polity, and Morals of the Christian Church; and the extent of this subject demands that our attention should be directed to it without the delay of more preliminary observation.

I. In proceeding to an examination of the effects of ancient Paganism on the FORMS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP, we may remark that ceremonies of some kind have been connected with every thing important in the civil relations and transactions of mankind; and that, in consequence, something of the same description was to have been expected in connexion with the new and more solemn relations introduced by religion, and with the extraordinary facts on which these relations are founded.

We read, for example, of the installations of knight
of the inauguration of magistrates, of the coronati
monarchs. These visible observances have existen
the symbols and seals of these several institutes rel
to civil society. The knight is raised to be one of a
vileged class, and is so raised through the medium
ceremony designed to indicate his elevation; and the l
of his new rank is, for this reason, to be henceforl
tached to his person. The man who is called from a
his fellow-citizens to high municipal office, is vested
a new dignity and new trusts; and the forms of his
guration, the sword committed to his hand, and the
in which he is arrayed, all are meant to bespeal
nature of the relation thus instituted, both as regard
individual and society. As the sovereign of a nati
its chief magistrate, his induction to the higher re
sibilities awaiting him, is accompanied by ceremoni
similar significance, but of greater splendour and g
solemnity.

In the estimation of many persons, all pageants o
kind partake more of the puerile and the ludicrous
of the august or impressive. But the people of near
countries have attached no small importance to t
and for this reason, if for no other, priests and magist
who *must* be rulers of the people, have extended
patronage to them. Accordingly, the notices relati
such observances meet us in every page of history, whe
men have risen above the lowest state of barba
With the advances of society, forms of this descriptio
found to multiply, in place of being diminished.
make their appearance as symbols of almost every
kind of obligation, denoting the fidelity that should
the members of particular fraternities to each other,
lending their sanction to the oath which unites the
and its chieftain, the vassal and his lord.

There is enough in these facts to warrant the

clusion, that such usages have their origin in some strong sense of want in this direction, common to human nature. They seem to constitute the costume and drapery (if we may so express it) in which the mind has ever been disposed to array its abstractions on the matters of social life, so as to bring them into a nearer alliance with the more tangible objects to which they have immediate relation. That attempts would be made to give this sort of visibility to the floating theories of the human mind, on the subject of religion, was an event to be expected. It was probable, moreover, that efforts of this nature, as taking place in reference to religion, would be of a more elaborate description than in the cases we have mentioned—in consequence of the higher and more mysterious nature of religious truth, and of religious obligation, and from the more constant and immediate relation of ceremonies in religion to the religious sentiments of the people. In the priesthood of every ancient form of religion, we see its magistracy; in its different functionaries, from the humblest among them to the supreme pontiff, we see those subordinations of power which obtain in every civil polity; and in the province assigned to every priesthood, as authorities delegated to secure to the power, or powers, by which the universe was supposed to be governed, a due allegiance, we see the parallel of authorities which exist for the purpose of securing a due allegiance to Cæsar. Thus religion every where appears as appropriating to itself much of the machinery proper to a worldly kingdom. We expect, accordingly, that it will have its pageants and ceremonies, in common with such kingdoms, and, for the reason named, that it will have them in a greater measure.

We have seen, in our review of ancient paganism, that what it would have been reasonable to expect in this connexion, came to pass. The Christian religion in history, not only has its ceremonies, but has them to so great an

extent that they seem to constitute its substance, embracing nearly everything that the multitude of mankind are wont to regard as included in it. From the earliest ages in the history of the church, forms thus originated meet us continually; and as the professed worshippers of Jehovah become large and opulent communities, their religious ritual becomes, in the manner of such communities, everywhere more varied, comprehensive, and costly. As the simple observances of patriarchal times, were superseded in the ancient world by others more in character with the growing power and splendour of its states and empires, so did it happen, and by divine appointment, among the Hebrews themselves, by whom the worship of the true God was to be preserved. The original design of these observances was to serve as images of certain truths, or of speculations so regarded; and as such they were varied in their form, according to the higher conceptions, or the more cultivated taste, of the parties to whom they were addressed. They were the hieroglyphic representations in which truth was embodied and taught, and the more complex they were, the more, up to a certain point, did they bespeak the advanced, or the artificial, modes of thought, in the mind of the people among whom they had obtained. We say that up to a certain point only this was the fact. For though a ritual characterized by much artificial arrangement and beauty must ever bespeak an advanced state of speculation in the people who have given it existence, or who are prepared to make an intelligent use of it, yet the existence of such means, for the purpose of setting forth the principles or lessons of religion, should be regarded, for the most part, in the light of a condescension to human weakness. When the manhood of our species shall have come, such aids will be little needed.

On this principle, if the gospel dispensation be the most advanced form in which religion will be known

in our imperfect world, it must follow that its ritual will be very simple and limited. If it be *the ministration of the Spirit*, that is, the ministration of a more abundant light and sanctity, it must be a ministration in which bodily exercise will be counted as profiting little. As we do not expect perfection in religion in the present state, so we do not expect any dispensation of religion that will be strictly independent of ritual services:—but in its last and best economy in this world, we are justified in expecting a union between the most advanced state of society, and the simplest forms of external worship—religion itself being so nearly and devoutly contemplated, as to leave little to be accomplished by means of any observance appealing to the senses.

Now this is precisely the state of things we find in the New Testament. We search in vain for its book of Leviticus. But we need not search long to discover the essentials of Christian truth, or of Christian character and duty. It says very little about forms, but much about the unseen realities which forms should resemble;—little as to the *mode* in which men should worship the Almighty, but much as to the *spirit* in which it should be done. The fact that the Israelites were furnished with instructions so ample and minute relative to forms of worship, was in itself enough to have warranted the persuasion that the dispensation to follow that of Moses would be accompanied by a similar course of minute directions on such topics, if a similar order of services had been regarded as proper to the new ministration. The absence, accordingly, of such instructions in the New Testament, is conclusive that such services are no longer to hold the place which was once assigned to them; but that such matters are now left to be regulated by those brief injunctions and intimations which it contains in relation to such points; and still more, to that spirituality and wisdom which the gospel will never fail to confer on its sincere disciples.

The language of Paul is strictly to this effect, when, checking some unscriptural indulgences among the Corinthians, he says—"That which I received of the Lord I delivered unto you." The brevity, the indirectness,—the very looseness, observable in the notices which occur on such points in the New Testament, furnish evidence, not, as some may contend, that a new power was to be created for the purpose of supplying the imagined deficiency of the Scriptures in this respect, but rather, that the age for elaborate effort and scrupulous attention in regard to mere ceremonies had passed.

The great Lycurgus taught the men of Lacedæmon to believe, "that magnificent edifices, and costly sacrifices, were not so pleasing to the gods, as the true piety of their worshippers;" and on this principle excluded all unnecessary expense and pomp from such services. Even the Athenian oracle was constrained to pronounce, that "the honest unaffected services of the Lacedæmonians, were more acceptable to the gods than all the splendid and costly devotions of other people."* It is evident from the concession thus made, that the Lacedæmonians, in cherishing these more reasonable sentiments with respect to the manner in which the piety they professed should be manifested, were an exception to every other civilized community. With the rest of the world, religion was, as it long continued to be among the Israelites themselves, a matter which was to be made attractive by the aids of ceremonial similitudes, or pictures.

This general fondness of mankind for a religion characterized by ritual pomp, is one of the tendencies of human nature, from which, as we have shown elsewhere, serious injury was to have been apprehended with regard to Christianity. The danger inseparable from such a state of the human mind, must be, lest religion itself should be overlooked, in the attention bestowed on these inefficie

* Potter, Archæologia Græca, I. 157.

representations of it, and lest a spirit of will-worship, of scrupulousness, and intolerance, in relation to such things, should become so far manifest as to leave intelligent men almost excusable in supposing, that in the prejudices having respect to such visibilities, they have seen the spirit and substance of the Christian religion. And this, unhappily, is the state in which the profession of the gospel is but too generally found, and from a very early period. The controversy which rose so early, and was maintained with so much pertinacity, with respect to the obligation of the Jewish ritual, gave sufficient indication of the peril that would beset the religion of the New Testament from this source.

During the first three centuries, while the religion of Christians was so commonly a religion of secrecy, there was comparatively little room for incorporating the ostentatious ceremonies of heathenism, with the simple institutions of the gospel. Nor was the inclination to adopt such admixtures likely to be so considerable while Paganism retained its ascendancy, and employed its power in persecuting the church, as at a later period, when its wasted strength hardly left to it the position of an antagonist. In not a few respects, however, the manner in which public worship was performed, and the sacraments administered, was such, even during this early period, as to betray but too great a readiness to symbolize with customs that should have been left to idolaters.

From the beginning, the Christian worship consisted in ding and expounding the Holy Scriptures, in the offer- up of prayers and thanksgiving, and in the singing of as. "On the day called Sunday," says Justin Martyr, re is an assembling together of all who dwell in the and country, and the memoirs of the apostles, and writings of the prophets, are read as long as circum- es permit. Then, when the reader has ceased, the dent delivers a discourse, in which he admonishes

and exhorts the people to an imitation of the excelle
things they have heard. Then we all rise, and, in commo
send up our prayers to God. Prayers being ended, brea
and wine and water, are brought. The president, in lik
manner, then offers prayers and thanksgivings, accordin
to his ability, and the people express their assent by sa
ing, Amen. The things which have been the subject
thanksgiving are then distributed, and received by eve
one present, a portion being sent by the deacons to th
absent. Those who have substance, and who are dispose
contribute according to their judgment, and the amou
collected is placed with the president, who is therewith
assist orphans and widows, and all who from sickness,
any other cause, are in want; also all prisoners a
strangers who are among us; and, in general, he is th
guardian of all who are destitute. Our meeting on Sund
is because it is the first day, that in which God, havi
produced the necessary change in darkness and matt
created the world; and because on this day Jesus Chr
our Saviour arose from the dead. For on the day befo
Saturn (or Saturday) he was crucified; and on the d
after, which is the day of the Sun (or Sunday), havi
shown himself to his apostles and disciples, he instruct
them in the matters now submitted by us to your co
sideration."* In this instructive passage, no mention

* Καὶ τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένῃ ἡμέρᾳ πάντων κατὰ πόλεις ἢ ἄγρους μενόντων ἐπὶ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται, καὶ τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων, ἢ τὰ συγγράμμ τῶν προφητῶν αναγινώσκεται, μέχρις ἐγχωρεῖ. εἶτα παυσαμένου τοῦ αναγινώσκον ὁ προεστὼς διὰ λόγου τὴν νονθεσίαν καὶ πρόκλησιν τῆς τῶν καλῶν τούτων μιμήσ ποιεῖται. ἔπειτα ανιστάμεθα κοινῇ πάντες, καὶ εὐχὰς πέμπομεν· καὶ, ὡς προέφη παυσαμένων ἡμῶν τῆς εὐχῆς, ἄρτος προσφέρεται, καὶ οἶνος, καὶ ὕδωρ. Καὶ ὁ προεσ εὐχὰς ὁμοίως καὶ εὐχαριστίας, ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ, ἀναπέμπει, καὶ ὁ λαὸς επευφη λέγων τὸ ἀμήν καὶ ἡ διάδοσις καὶ ἡ μετάληψις ἀπὸ τῶν εὐχαριστηθέντων ἑκά γίνεται, καὶ τοῖς οὐ παροῦσιν διὰ διακόνων πέμπεται. οἱ εὐποροῦντες δὲ καὶ βουλόμε κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ὁ βούλεται δίδωσι, καὶ τὸ συλλεγόμενον πα τῷ προεστῶτι, αποτίθεται, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπικουρεῖ ὀρφανοῖς τε καὶ χήραις, καὶ τοῖς νόσον ἢ δι' ἄλλην αἰτίαν λειπομένοις, καὶ τοῖς ἐν δεσμοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τοῖς παρεπιδήμ οὖσι ξένοις, καὶ ἁπλῶς, πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν χρείᾳ οὖσι κηδεμὼν γίνεται. *Et seq.* Ap. I. 97, 98. Ed. Thirlbii.

made of singing; but that this formed a part of the general services of the early Christians, is not only to be inferred from the precepts and examples relating to it in the New Testament, but is evident from the letter of Pliny, which describes the Christians of Bithynia as meeting together for the purpose of singing hymns to Christ as a god.

The extract we have just cited, interesting as it is, is not without its evidence that innovation had already made considerable advances. The practice of mixing the sacramental wine with water, was a departure from the primitive usage; as was the custom of sending a portion of the consecrated elements (for it is plain they were already viewed as partaking of a special sanctity) to such as were absent. With such novelties we must reckon the exorcisms, spells, and fastings of those times; the growing aversion to the marriage state; the kind of ornaments which began to be admitted into places of worship; the use of incense; the practice of washing the hands, sometimes the whole body, as a religious ceremony; and the manner in which the cloak was disposed of before commencing public prayer—all of which were instances of conformity with Gentile customs. In the same spirit of superstitious formalism, it became usual for Christians to pray with their hands raised and extended, in the form of the cross—that great talisman in all their enterprises. During the interval between Easter and Whitsuntide they were wont to pray in a standing posture, in commemoration of the Saviour's resurrection. At all times, their supplications were presented looking toward the East, in the manner of the heathen, with whom the sun was a principal object of worship; and Tertullian considered it expedient to admonish some of his brethren, that it was not by the strength of their lungs that they gained the ear of the Almighty.

The causes which led to these and other changes in the mode of worship, also led men to attach a special sanctity to particular times and places, connecting them, not unfre-

quently, with certain customs which became known in ecclesiastical history under the name of *festivals*. Not only were Easter and Whitsuntide thus observed, but many days, memorable in the history of distinguished believers, especially in the case of confessors and martyrs, were thus honoured. The scenes which had been in a manner consecrated by the extraordinary devotion of such persons, became holy in the esteem of their brethren who survived them, and, like their relics, were preserved, wherever it was possible, from desecration.

Before the days of Constantine, the Lord's supper was administered in vessels of silver and gold, and with many circumstances unknown to it in the age of its institution. Feasts were appointed, sometimes to precede, and sometimes to follow its observance; and the institute itself being deemed necessary to salvation, infants were frequently included among its recipients. This service, moreover, became the great mystery of the Christian ritual,—not only as being restricted to persons of accredited religious knowledge and character, but as partaking of the occult efficacy, and, in some respects, of the secrecy, which had given so much influence in the popular imagination to the mysteries of Paganism.

But the superstitions connected with baptism, in the early ages of which we now speak, were more considerable than those which disfigured the administration of the eucharist. The unbaptized were commonly regarded as persons possessed with evil spirits, and were often avoided expressly on such grounds. The persons admitted to this rite, were admitted in the presence of the initiated only; and the imposition of hands, which now formed an important part of the observance, was supposed to confer at once the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was not done, however, until the exorcist had employed his various expedients to dislodge the evil principle from within, and thus to remove the great cause of all the

revious inconsistency and depravity of the man now pro-
ssing himself a believer. But this great work accom-
lished, not only the soul, but the body, of the baptized
erson, became capable of devotion to the service of God,
nd might be raised to the enjoyment of the Divine pre-
sence in the world to come. In token of the great change
thus produced, the baptized returned home adorned with
crowns, and arrayed in white garments, as emblems—the
former of their victory over sin and the world, the latter of
their inward purity. And as it was usual with communi-
cants to abstain from taking food before receiving the
eucharist, so the baptized abstained from their ordinary
ablutions after baptism. This was delayed until the bap-
tismal week had passed; and such was the sanctity sup-
posed to belong to the baptismal water, that the bodies of
the persons to whom it was applied were carefully wiped,
lest any portion of it should be profaned by falling to the
earth. On the following Lord's day, the newly baptized
made their appearance in church, where they put off their
white garments, and received what was called the ablution.
These corrupt inventions, be it remembered, with others
that might be mentioned, all belonged to the period which
preceded the age of Constantine.*

But when the emperors extended their protection to our
long-persecuted faith, their ill-directed zeal, and that of
their new spiritual advisers, was such as to obscure the
simple beauty of the Christian worship by so many admix-
tures from the customs of heathenism, that volumes might
be filled with a description of the novelties thus intro-
duced. From this time, the pageantries by which the
Greeks and Romans had attempted to honour their ima-
ginary deities, might be every where seen, with very rare
exceptions, and some trivial modifications, as parts of the

* Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. I. 289—294. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, II. 81.

established worship of the church; until Augustine could speak of the yoke of Christian ceremonies as having become more difficult to bear than that of the Mosaic law. The plea in support of these proceedings was, that they were necessary as means of drawing the pagan multitudes over to the profession of Christianity, and necessary no less as means of retaining them in that profession when made. "Hence it happened," says Mosheim, "that in those times, the religion of the Greeks and Romans differed very little in its external appearance from that of the Christians. They had both a most pompous and splendid ritual, gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax tapers, crosiers, processions, lustrations, images, gold and silver vases, and many such circumstances of pageantry were equally to be seen in the heathen temples and the Christian churches."* The chief difference, we may add, was, that these things, instead of having reference to the fictitious deities hitherto worshipped, were now made to refer to angels, and saints, and martyrs; so that the new system, not only embraced the ritual, but the spirit—the actual polytheism of the old.

At the same time, the special services instituted in honour of these new divinities, and the five annual festivals commemorative of the principal events in the history of the Redeemer, led not to the cultivation of holy or virtuous habits among the people, but rather to frivolity, sensual indulgence, and often to the grossest vices. In the ordinary Christian assemblies,—so dominant had the spirit of worldly ostentation become,—preachers were wont to encourage the people in expressing admiration of the inflated harangues addressed to them, by clapping of hands, and the loudest acclamations, in the manner of an audience in a theatre. The Lord's supper now began to be administered at the tombs of martyrs, and at funerals; a practice which aided to introduce the performing of masses

* Eccles. Hist. I. 393, 394.

in honour of the saints, and for the benefit of the dead. The bread and wine also were elevated, before distribution, as objects entitled in themselves to the veneration of the people; and the custom of treating the eucharist as a *mystery*, the sacred import of which was not to be explained except to persons initiated as communicants, became more general. The administering of baptism was restricted, except in cases of urgency, to the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide; and beside the inventions we have already mentioned as connected with it, lighted tapers were now employed; salt, as the emblem of purity, was also used; and a double unction was connected with the rite, the one preceding it and the other following.*

An event which contributed beyond others to this rapid progress of superstition, was the frequent conversion of the heathen temples into places of Christian worship. The fallen state of paganism, which such events implied, produced a false confidence of safety; and, like the Trojans, after having resisted open violence for so many years, Christians fell in love with an idol, without knowing how much mischief it contained. It was the instruction of Gregory the Great to his missionaries among our Saxon fathers, that, as they had consecrated certain idol temples to the worship of the true God, so they were to allow the continuance of such festivities as had been usual with the people worshipping in such edifices, only taking care to apprise them that they must regard such convivialities in future as being in honour of Christ and the saints, and not as in honour of the false gods whose service they had renounced. This is exactly the course which matters had long taken in similar cases. In all the old pagan temples, was the aquaminarium, or vessel containing purifying water, at the doors. There were paintings, and statues, of workmanship too exquisite to be destroyed. There were

* Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. I. 392—399.

numerous altars, and censers, and tripods, and votive offerings, and a thousand things beside, which composed the furniture of such places. It was deemed reasonable, that many of these ornaments and utensils, particularly such as were thought to be not necessarily idolatrous in their significance, should be retained. The mind which felt no scruple in employing the profane building itself for a sacred purpose, learnt to feel as little in adapting the interior matters of such buildings to the same object Hence the striking resemblance so often observable, even to this day, between the places of worship dedicated to ancient heathenism, and those dedicated to Christianity. In Italy, and in most Catholic countries, this parallel extends from the quality to the quantity of the supply—the number of churches, like that of the old pagan temples, much exceeding the number that could with any reason have been demanded. In Rome only, there are said to have been upwards of four hundred structures sacred to its ancient deities; and in the modern city and its suburbs, there are now more than a hundred and fifty sacred to the Christian saints.*

And it would be well if these tendencies towards idolatry were with us purely matters of history, or peculiar to countries, if not to times, separated from our own. But while through the greater part of Christendom the office of Christianity would seem to have been to perpetuate the forms of ancient paganism, rather than to abolish them, in our own country—in Protestant England, too much of the same kind is observable. How many things are found in the worship of our state church for which no sanction can be adduced from the writers of the New Testament? And whence should these be traced? Whence the images and pictures which cover the walls of our Protestant edifices? Why must the table of the Lord be still described

* Blunt's Vestiges of Ancient Manners in Italy, pp. 86—88.

as an altar, and the name of priest be still given to the minister? What is meant by these mitres, these many-coloured vestments, these white robes, and these chantings of Holy Writ after a fashion so little natural? Why this special homage to the East; this kneeling to partake of the sacramental bread and wine; and this signing of the cross in baptism? In these things, and in more like these, we have some of the effects of that antique, that once wide-spread Paganism, which, in process of time, became so mixed with Christianity, as to leave to it scarcely any thing, either of the spirit, or of the external forms, which once distinguished it.

We must now turn from this brief retrospect with regard to the effect of ancient paganism on the WORSHIP proper to the Christian church, to notice its influence on the POLITY, or laws, of this spiritual commonwealth.

II. And here it may be well to advert, in the first place, to what is taught in Scripture concerning the nature of the Christian church and fellowship.

1. The term in the New Testament which our translators have rendered by the word 'CHURCH,' is one which, in its primary signification, denotes nothing more than an *assembly*. Even in the inspired writings it is employed to express a gathering of persons into one place, without any reference to the character of the persons so convened, or to the object for which they had met.* But in its conventional, and more general use among us, it has reference commonly, either to the whole body of real Christians, or to some particular society of such persons. Its use, as signifying the ministers of religion in distinction from the people, or as embracing all the persons professing Christianity in a province or nation, is unknown in the sacred Scriptures. We read in the New Testament of "the church at Jerusalem," of "the church in the house

* Acts xix. 32.

of Priscilla and Aquila," and of "the churches in Judea;" and "the churches in Galatia;" but we meet with no such phrase as the church of Judea, or the church of Galatia. This application of the term, was reserved until the time when Christianity became established as a "part and parcel" of the kingdoms of this world. Hooker defines the term church as meaning "a congregation of faithful men." But from the age when national establishments of Christianity made their appearance, the word must have generally ceased to have such a signification, inasmuch as the greater number of the persons whom it would be understood to include were manifestly destitute of the faith intended. They might be Christians by profession, they can hardly be said to have been believers in the sense of holy Scripture.

With this change in the received meaning of the word church, others no less material came. In the primitive ages of Christianity, the bonds of association among disciples were all strictly voluntary. Every man who became a part of this visible brotherhood, by a credible profession of the faith of Christ, became such as the result his own free choice. The great law which prevailed in matters of religion was, that nothing should be done "by constraint," but that every thing must proceed from a willing mind." That the gospel should be cordially received, and openly professed, was an obligation devolved on every man to whom it was made known. But his responsibility in regard to this duty, was a matter having reference to God only, and not to man.

If the Redeemer did not employ the weapons of a worldly kingdom to make his people willing, it was simply because he knew those weapons to be unsuited to such a purpose. But while passing by the aid of brute force, which can never produce a willing obedience, inasmuch as it can never reach the faculties of the mind, he has provided for this object most wisely and abundantly in the gospel. The truth which it conveys to the understanding, affects

the heart, constraining the rebellious to submit themselves, and making submission their delight. It seeks the accomplishment of a spiritual end, and seeks it only by spiritual means. The fellowship which it calls into existence is clearly meant to be a fellowship of saints; and one, in consequence, to which no man who was not credibly possessed of that character could be entitled, or at all qualified to share. The church is accordingly described, as consisting of a holy community "for whom Christ died." And whatever the steps were by which the body of believers were led to form this judgment of the persons who were admitted to their society, it is certain that such a judgment was formed of them; and that when circumstances arose to alter this judgment with regard to any man who had obtained a place among them, that person, as being incapable of entering into the sacred design of the Christian fellowship, was to be "put away." "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened; for even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat."* This union of the faithful, therefore, resulted from what was peculiar to them as compared with the world, and from what they possessed in common as the disciples of Christ. It sprung at once from the singularity and the sameness of their faith, their experience, and their hopes. What they were in natural capability or acquirement, was of comparatively small significance; what they were as Christians was of infinite moment; and in this sentiment, which lies at the foundation of the Christian fellowship, the sincere believer can alone sympathize. Admission into a Christian church was

* 1 Cor. v. 7, 11.

not a step connected in any way with secular distinction; and to be excluded from such a body, was not to be placed under any disadvantage as a member of society; while, in every case of admission or exclusion, the freedom of these voluntary assemblies, did not consist in a liberty to act according to their pleasure, but according to their conviction as to the course prescribed to them by the law of Christ.

One very observable effect of the civil establishment of Christianity,—which resulted, partly from the influence of Judaism, and still more from customs which every where obtained in the Gentile world,—was to throw open the institute designed to be especially symbolic of the Christian fellowship, to the whole people of states and kingdoms. Nor was it enough that the renewal of men "in the spirit of the mind," the one qualification for Christian communion in the early ages of the church, was in this manner dispensed with. Other requisitions were devised and enforced, the result of which was to substitute another spirit in the place of that by which the first Christians had been bound to each other. The evidence of genuine piety, which it had been usual to demand from every candidate for admission into this spiritual commonwealth, gave place by degrees to a mere profession of faith in church dogmas, and in the mystery of the strange powers said to have been conferred on the Christian priesthood.

It is true, even Paganism was not without its terms of communion,—or its conditions of admission to its more sacred observances. Occasions were frequent on which the profane were warned to a distance. But the qualifications demanded were much more ceremonial than moral, and those required as preliminary to Christian communion soon came to be of the same description. In our own country, and to this day, we see consequences which have followed from this course of proceeding—all men being

presumed, not only to be Christians, but Christians approving the established form of Christianity, unless professing themselves otherwise.

Be it remembered, then, that the term church is used in a corrupt sense, when applied in this manner to civil establishments of Christianity; and that the great tendency of such establishments has been to vitiate, and even to destroy, Christian fellowship, in so far as it is connected with its great symbol—the Lord's supper, and in so far as it relates to what are accounted acts of the church. The communion of saints in such connexions is restricted to the intercourse of private Christians with each other; what is called church communion, must include both the church and the world.

2. We have next to observe, that the churches constituted on this strictly voluntary basis, and thus wholly spiritual in their character, were churches possessing each a separate and INDEPENDENT authority. If such was not their position, it must have been in consequence of some intrusion on the part of the magistrate, or as the effect of principles adopted by themselves.

With regard to the magistrate, it is not more certain that the first assemblies of the faithful were convened without his bidding, than that their polity was established, and their affairs conducted, without his interference. The strict independence of these communities, in so far as the state was concerned, is beyond dispute. But from the age of Constantine this order of things no longer existed. The protection and encouragement so long conferred by the laws of the state on its established Paganism, were henceforth to be conferred on its established Christianity. Thus the new religion became a portion of the empire, and became in consequence a dependent on the supreme authority of the empire. By that authority, all its great representative assemblies were convened; and on the

sanction of that authority the decisions of such assemblies virtually rested for all their validity, even when relating to the most perplexing questions of theology.*

In vindication of this now long-established alliance between the church and the state, it is usual to insist that while it would have been unnatural in a pagan magistrate to employ the kind of power at his command in aid of the gospel, such a course was imperative on the magistrate as professing Christianity. Now it will not be denied that there is an obligation laid on every such person to promote the cause of the religion he has professed, and to do so to the utmost of his ability. But the means must be in agreement with the end, and according to the revealed will of the only Head and Lawgiver of the church. No man is authorized to do evil that good may come; neither is any man to bring strange fire to the altar, or to lay an unhallowed hand upon the ark, on the plea of holding the office of a magistrate. The only weapon of the magistrate is force, he has nothing to do with persuasion. The only weapon of the Church is persuasion, she has nothing to do with force. The great end proposed by civil government must be an outward submission, while that mainly intended by the gospel is an inward renovation. The one authority meddles not with the inclination or the motive, the other makes every thing depend on them. If Christian societies should be strictly voluntary, force is an element which must be altogether inapplicable to them; and as the magistrate, *as such*, has nothing else to bring, it follows that no man, *as* a magistrate, can in reason be allowed an influence over them.

* Some attempt was made by Constantine (Euseb. De Vitâ Constant. lib. iv. c. xxiv.), and still more by subsequent emperors (Cod. Theodos. VI. tit. 58, 383, *et alibi*), to determine the limits of the civil and ecclesiastical power with regard to religion. But these theories availed little in the working of affairs, the crown and the mitre being alternately aggressors, according to circumstances.

So long as the men who are known as constituting an assembly professing Christianity, are also known to be good subjects, they are entitled to the protection of the civil power, whose shield should be over them alike in their social intercourse and in their religious exercises. But if societies of this nature must look for something more than protection, then let them look for something less than independence. Let them descend to become pensioners, and they must cease to be free. And the persons who are so forward in accusing other men of withholding one half of their obedience from Cæsar, because they thus refuse to make the will of Cæsar their authority in religion, will do well to inquire whether they may not themselves be convicted of withholding obedience in a still greater degree from God, inasmuch as the manifest tendency of their own system is to show a greater deference to the pretensions of worldly power, than to the spiritual claims of the gospel, and, in fact, to give the laws of men precedence of the laws of God. The Churchman, who, for this cause, must charge the Dissenter with being not more than half an Englishman, might be denounced with equal fairness as being not more than half a Christian. What the magistrate owes to Christianity, is the whole of that general influence which pertains to him as a member of society, not any special use of the special authority which belongs to him as a magistrate.

But while there was so much in the fundamental laws, and in the obvious characteristics and design of Christianity, opposed to the introduction of that kind of power into the church which is entrusted to the magistrate, is there any thing in the Scriptures, or in the practice of antiquity, to justify the conclusion, that the churches of Christ were meant to be subject to authority as regarded their relation one to another? It is not pretended that the primitive churches were independent of the authority of the apostles. The apostles were inspired teachers, the companions of

the Saviour in his sufferings, and the specially appointed witnesses of his resurrection. Their authority accordingly was peculiar; it could not descend to others, it could not become a precedent to others. With regard to those unerring instructors, no church could profess to be independent without abandoning all claim to be viewed as a society of Christians. But on the death of the apostles, we find every Christian church possessing all the freedom of a separate republic. Superiority of any sort, on the part of one congregation over another, is not discoverable in the New Testament, and is altogether unknown through a considerable period subsequent to the apostolic age. On this point we might adduce the language of Gibbon, of Dr. Barrow, and of others of equal authority. One witness of this class shall suffice. "Neither in the New Testament," says Mosheim, "nor in any ancient document whatever, do we find any thing recorded from whence it might be inferred, that any of the minor churches were at all dependent on, or looked up for direction to, those of greater magnitude or consequence; on the contrary, several things occur therein which put it out of all doubt that every one of them enjoyed the same rights, and was considered as being on a footing of perfect equality with the rest."*

In states the most free, it is common for persons to be deputed from each, who, together, constitute an assembly representing the whole; and it is usual for the whole, in such cases, to consider themselves bound by the decisions of this delegated authority. But in religious affairs, no body of persons have a right to take upon themselves this legislative character with regard to other bodies; nor

* De Rebus Christian. Seculum Primum, sect. 48. "Whatever the practice might be in later times, as yet (when the church at Jerusalem was assembled, Acts xv.) no jurisdiction was exercised by one Christian society over another; not even by the church of Jerusalem over her children in Christ." Hind's History of the Early Progress of Christianity, I. 277.

is any community or individual at liberty to concede such a power to the wisest or the most holy of uninspired men. It would be contrary to that law of moral freedom which lies at the foundation of every thing strictly Christian. "One is your Master." "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind." "To his own Master he standeth or falleth." These are maxims without which nothing can be done—"as to the Lord and not unto men." But these are maxims certainly contravened by every ecclesiastical association which, not content with the delivering of opinions or of advice, presumes to legislate on the matters of that kingdom which is "not of this world." In affairs of mere business, a delegated power of this nature may be expedient and lawful. But on no point where the faith of Christians is concerned, is any such surrender to be made. Men cannot shape their opinions so as to make them always agreeable to the pattern which may be set before them by their rulers. And if the statutes of parliaments, and the decrees of councils, do not produce this unity of opinion, they accomplish nothing that can be said properly to belong to religion. The schemes of civil or of ecclesiastical power may be subserved by such proceedings; but the interests of religion, as consisting in a certain condition of the mind, are not subserved. It cannot be pretended, that any man possessing the means of correct information, will be accounted innocent in substituting the falsehood which may happen to be commended by the priest or the magistrate, in the place of truth as taught in the Bible. The men who did so in the apostolic age, whether Jews or Gentiles, were not judged as guiltless.

3. Among the circumstances which contributed in this manner to make religion an affair of state, more than an affair of the conscience, a conspicuous place must be assigned to the changes introduced with regard to the OFFICERS of the church. Paul assures us, that when the Redeemer left the earth, he constituted those authorities in his church

that were requisite for its edification, and they are thus described: "Some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." The apostolic office was such as could not be transmitted to the men of any future generation; the prophetic character ceased, necessarily, when inspiration ceased. But the office of the evangelist continues to exist in the case of persons who are preachers without being pastors; and "pastors and teachers" describe the only other function instituted by the Saviour with a view to permanence; and both these terms appear, from the manner of their introduction, and from many other facts, to mean the same persons.

But it is proper to inquire,—did the apostles make any addition to that number of offices which Paul has enumerated as instituted by the immediate authority of the Redeemer? The office of deacon, it appears, was thus introduced.* We have no hint, however, in the writings of the apostles as to any similar exercise of their power. The only question, therefore, is, what the word *pastor*, as employed in the above passage, should be understood to denote. "In my own opinion," observes President Dwight,

* The institution of the office of deacon is described in the sixth chapter of the Acts. The language of Peter on that occasion, especially his observation—"It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables," implies, beyond doubt, that the serving of tables, which was in future to devolve upon deacons, or "servants," had hitherto pertained of right though not always in usage, to himself, and his brethren in the apostleship. It is accordingly mentioned, as an advantage to result from the new arrangement, that the apostles would then be able to "give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." The great object of the deacon's office manifestly was, to secure those who were called to labour in word and doctrine from secular distraction. But though the office was recognised by the solemnity of ordination, the care of the poor is the *only function directly mentioned* in Scripture as pertaining to it. With modern congregationalists, the office is understood as embracing much more than this, and, as we think, unwisely; but this practice rests on expediency, or on a sense of fitness, not on any direct authority from Scripture. See a learned and extended note on this subject, in Moshiem, De Rebus ante Constant. Seculum Primum, sect. 37, pp. 118—125.

word includes a single class only, spoken of elsewhere
e Scriptures under the names of elders, bishops, mi-
rs, teachers, and some others." The word *bishop*,
ı, beyond controversy, is synonymous with the word
or *presbyter*, occurs in such a manner in the introduc-
›f the Epistle to the Philippians, as to show that more
one person in that church sustained this office; and that
g the persons sustaining it there was no official pre-
ıce. The epistle is addressed to "the saints in Christ
ı, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."
language was intended to present a complete descrip-
›f the church and its officers; and if instead of being
troduced, it had been addressed to the "bishops,
ters, and deacons," every man will at once see the
usion that would have been deduced from this more
dox form of salutation.

is no breach of candour to suppose, that the evidence
ı has extorted from the advocates of prelatical epis-
y the concessions so often made by them, with respect
ɜ strict equality of the primitive pastors, is such as to
l but irresistible. Under the Tudor dynasty in our
y, the notion generally assented to was, that both
ffice and the jurisdiction of the prelates were of purely
n institution. The statements to this effect which
in the writings of Gibbon and Mosheim, contain
ng more than had been long since conceded by
ɜd episcopalians, and devout reformers in this coun-
and even by our parliaments, and our houses of
cation. Under Henry the Eighth, the two houses of
cation, and the two houses of parliament, were agreed
ırming, that in "the New Testament, there is no men-
›f any other degrees but of deacons or ministers, and
ɜsbyters or bishops:"* and in declaring, as the con-
nce, that every shade of official inequality in the

* Institution of a Christian Man.

pastors of the church, had been introduced "by the of men, and not by any ordinance of God." Th *divinum* of episcopacy, and in its modern baronia diocesan form, was a doctrine left to be broached insisted on by Bancroft, whose zeal in this directio posed James the First to raise him to the see of Canter From that time, an alliance was openly formed betwee partizans of the divine right of bishops, and the part of the divine right of kings; and from that time we to date a settled conspiracy on the part of certain o leaders in church and state against the civil and reli liberties of a great people. The result of this treas high places is well known.

It was to correct the ambition which had led his ciples to indulge in strife as to who among them sh excel their brethren in honour, that the blessed Rede announced, in the most emphatic terms, what shoul in this respect the law of his kingdom. "Ye kn said he, "that they which are accounted to rule ove Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great exercise authority upon them. BUT SO SHALL IT NO AMONG YOU; for whosoever will be great among you be your minister, and whomsoever among you wi the chiefest shall be servant of all." The repugnan this language to the hierarchical principles on w churchmen have founded the colossal framework of power, is of the strongest kind imaginable.

But while we look in vain to the New Testamen to the earliest ecclesiastical writers, for proof tha hierarchical form of government was the form desi for the Christian church by its Founder; while, in the evidence that does occur is of an opposite descri —it is, nevertheless, unquestionable, that before the of the second century, a nominal precedence, ceded occasions to some one presbyter by his brother presby began to acquire an *official* and *permanent* character

is moreover true, that as the necessary appointment of a chairman, in the smaller meetings of presbyters, served thus to introduce the new order of ecclesiastics, afterwards known exclusively by the name of *bishops*, so the appointment of a moderator in the councils which began to be convened in certain districts about the same period, produced the embryo—if we may so speak—of those dignitaries who, subsequently to the age of Constantine, were so extensively obeyed under the name of metropolitans, primates, and archbishops. When things had reached this point, nothing was wanting to give completeness to that vast platform of ecclesiastical power which was ere long constructed, but the introduction of the patriarchal authority, which should extend itself in its turn over that of the archbishops; and then the appearance among these exalted personages—vieing as they did with the great ones nearest to the throne—of some one possessing the means and the inclination to attempt a division of the government of the world with its chief ruler. Thus the church, in time, had its head, as the state had, with its chain of subordinates in the same descending perspective.

These momentous changes did not spring from good influences, and the influences natural to them were not good. The precedence to which learning, experience, and sanctity, are ever entitled, was superseded by one, having no necessary, and rarely any actual connexion with these honourable claims to distinction; and the great offices of the Christian church were accordingly sought as those of a pagan commonwealth would have been sought,—church promotion being valued simply as so much promotion to opulence and power. The function of the primitive bishop, from being every where connected with a single church or parish, and often in the humble form of a co-pastor, was to swell forth thus into the flattering importance of a diocesan prelacy; and the line of

equality once broken, no halting place was found, until the pretended successors of the fisherman presumed to tread on the neck of Cæsars! While the inferior clergy occupied the place always appropriate to their order, as a middle element between the higher and lower classes of society, bishops claimed equality with lords, and metropolitans took their places beside the sons of princes. And when cardinals began to affirm their rank to be the same with that of kings, it was but fitting that the pontiff himself should be announced as the king of kings, and lord of lords!

This parallel between the civil and ecclesiastical functionaryism of the Roman empire is no fiction of the imagination. It is altogether unquestionable, that this conformity between the spiritual and temporal authorities, up to the point presented in the institution of the patriarchal power, was the work of design; and a scheme which the first Christian emperor spared no pains to elaborate and complete. The machinery of a colossal secular government, adjusted under the joint influence of paganism, and military despotism, was thus imposed on the Christian church; the natural effect of which was to bring not a little of the heathenism and arbitrariness of the world into the church. Before this memorable period, the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, obtained, in the place of the primitive usage which only recognized the two orders—viz. bishops or pastors, and deacons. But all the other offices, whether subordinate to these or superior to them, of which we read in ecclesiastical history, are among the corruptions of the Christian institutes, which made their appearance after the third century.

4. The most considerable check to this progress of the aristocratic and despotic forms of power in the church, was found in the large INFLUENCE WHICH HAD PERTAINED TO THE PEOPLE in the better days of Christianity; and

their custom of appealing to THE SCRIPTURES AS THEIR AUTHORITATIVE RULE IN ALL THINGS. We have already made some mention of the power vested in the members of the primitive churches with regard to the admission of persons to their fellowship, and to the exclusion of offenders. Pertinacity in serious error was to be followed by exclusion;—"The man that is a heretic [factious] after the first and second admonition, reject." Immoral conduct was to call forth the same measure of rebuke—"Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person." And even in less serious offences, the same consequence was to follow, if the person offending should make light of private admonition from the offended party, and to the guilt of disregarding the censure of the elders, should add that of neglecting to hear the church. Concerning every such delinquent it is written, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."* But it is of the first importance to remark, that the act of excommunication expressed the judgment of the church concerning the excommunicated as being no longer a Christian. Nor have we many traces in ecclesiastical history, of its being applied to petty cases of delinquency at the call of resentment or caprice, of avarice or ambition, until what is called church authority was allowed to pass from the many to the few, becoming at length the exclusive possession of the clergy. In such a state of things, discipline, as in our own national church, becomes a mere name; or else degenerates into that odious policy which was once dominant in our bishops' courts; and which, in the court of high commission under Archbishop Laud, became a yoke on the neck of three kingdoms much too heavy to be borne.

If the influence of the people was of this character with regard to the persons who should be suffered to form a part of their organization as churches, it will be natural to

* Matthew xviii. 15, 16, 17.

presume that it was not less extended with regard to the appointment of the officers who should preside over them. Both these privileges result, and by the most natural process, from the strictly voluntary character of the primitive churches, and both were uniformly exercised in those churches. There was no force, save moral force, as included in reverence for the will of the Saviour, that could oblige any man to unite himself with a Christian church; nor did any power exist that could constrain a people to receive a minister as their pastor, who was not the object of their choice. The only provision made for the support of the Christian ministry, consisted in the voluntary offerings of the faithful—offerings which no human law was to extort, and which are enjoined in the New Testament on the assumption that the relation between the pastor and his charge will be one based on mutual esteem and affection. But this assumption suggests that the pastoral connexion is one which should always result from mutual preference—from the approval of the people, and from the responsive approval of the object of their choice.

Apart from considerations of this nature, it would have been a mockery to require that men should bring the doctrines submitted to them to "the law and the testimony;" that they should "try the spirits, whether they be of God;" that they should "beware of false prophets;" that they should "search the Scriptures," to see whether the things taught as scriptural "were so or not;"—all this would have been out of place and deceptive, if men were not also required to act upon their own conviction of duty in forming their relation to a pastor.

Thus, from the leading principles in the constitution of the primitive churches; from various notices relating to the practice of those churches; and from that solemn scrutiny which the taught are required to exercise in reference to the pretensions of their teachers—on all these grounds it follows, that the connexion between the Chris-

ian minister and his charge, was not to be the effect of interference and authority from without, but was to flow from mutual approval, that it might include mutual attachment. But men who would denounce the authority which should affect to deprive them of their right to choose their own physician, or their own attorney, can readily submit that a power beyond themselves should have the sole appointment of the person who should watch for the health of their soul, and minister for the security of their eternal interests!

It is to be distinctly observed, however, that this power of the people in matters of discipline, and in the choosing of officers, was by no means legislative. Its province was never to make laws, but to see that the laws of Christ were truly interpreted, and rightly applied. Every Christian church was bound to administer the law of Christ, the whole of that law, and nothing but that law. Accordingly, all those laws, creeds, and ceremonies which are not in agreement with the law of the New Testament, are so many inventions, which reflect on holy Scripture as an insufficient rule, and so many direct invasions of the office of the Redeemer as the only king and lawgiver in his church. As no church can include a legislative authority, it can have no such power to concede; and, in consequence, is not at liberty to admit the legislative interference of any body distinct from itself. A Christian church should know nothing of control, either from convocations or parliaments. Its statute-book is ever before it in the Scriptures, and is unerring and complete.

It would lead us far, were we to attempt a full description of the manner in which this popular influence was made to give place to more aristocratic forms of administration, and in which this authority of the Scriptures was made void through tradition. We must, however, remark, that the latter corruption was much more rapid in its progress than the former. Through a considerable period sub-

sequent to the civil establishment of Christianity, the right of the people to choose their own pastors was more or less respected. Father Paul speaks of this right as continuing, without the slightest infringement, during the first two hundred years; and not only describes it as universally respected to the close of the fifth century, but as a right which Charlemagne restored to the cities of his dominions.* But the Scriptures had become a sealed book to the multitude professing Christianity, long before the age of Charlemagne—their authority being wholly usurped by that of the church. As the magistrate, on becoming the patron of the church, invaded its independence; and as the successive spiritual lordships which rose within its own bosom, necessarily attracted to themselves powers which had been previously lodged elsewhere, the tendency of the course of things thus introduced, was to exclude the people, by a slow, deteriorating process, from all right of acting, and at length from all right of judging, in any degree independently, in matters of religion. It was not possible that Christianity should have been placed in alliance with the civil power, even in the most enlightened states of antiquity, without its being manifestly corrupted. The worldly, even then, must have obtruded itself, so as greatly to have obscured the glory of the religious. But in the case now under consideration, it is not only an alliance between the temporal and the spiritual, and one in which the latter is made to bear the strict semblance of the former; but the civil government which comes into this assimilating relation to the church, is one enfeebled and defiled with all the corruptions of a most sickening despotism. Well might we exclaim for Christianity, as thus allied, "Who shall deliver thee from the body of this death!"

III. In proceeding to glance at the influence of the religion of the Gentiles, on the MORALITY of the gospel, we

* On Benefices, cc. iii. vii. xv.

must not omit to remark, that ancient paganism did not meddle with questions of morality in any direct manner. So long as the people were observant of the established ceremonies, and not negligent in presenting the required offerings, the priests, both among the Greeks and Romans, were content that the business of deciding on the general laws of human duty, should be left to statesmen or philosophers. But the latter class of persons, while not displeased with having so noble a science thus freely assigned to them, discharged their obligations in a manner not greatly to their credit. Even on the most cultivated, the result of their labours was but too insignificant, partly from the errors and imperfections which were inseparable from their systems, but much more from their want of agreement among themselves, and from their common want of an adequate authority on which to rest even their wisest conclusions. Hence the morals of mankind, after all the deliberations of philosophy, were much less affected by what sages had taught, than by the practical lessons—often of the worst kind—which were embodied in the ceremonies and fables of their religion. The maxims of the schools were of small weight when placed over against the examples set forth in the popular mythology. By the models thus placed before them, the people were charmed as with some romantic fiction, and were beset by a thousand influences which tended to put error in the place of truth, and vice in the place of virtue.

A leading feature of the corruptions thus produced, and manifest almost from the birth of Christianity, consisted in the practice of regarding the ordinary duties of morality as subordinate to ceremonial observances; and as being of very much less account than those ascetic performances which with the majority of mankind have always appeared exceedingly meritorious—chiefly, it would seem, on account of their difficulty. From this error, all religions have been in their turn corrupted, and to their lowest root

In concluding this Course of Lectures, I cannot forbear to observe, that while the evils associated with the Christianity of remote ages have all, more or less, an existence among ourselves, they exist with us in a state much enfeebled and diminished. They every where bear upon them the signs of that which "decayeth and waxeth old." Lengthened was the interval appointed to precede the first proclamation of the gospel to mankind; and a long night of trial has since been allotted to it; but there is much, very much, to warrant hope, that the future will constitute the age of its purity and its triumphs;—that, better understood, and more devoutly received, it will pour its richest blessings on a world in which it has suffered such manifold and protracted wrong. Nor am I aware of anything that would more certainly indicate the near approach of such a consummation, than a more general disposition among Christians to investigate the causes which have served to produce the many corruptions of their common Christianity. If the costly process which has been going on through the last eighteen hundred years has in it any design, it must surely be that the weak points of our fallen nature might be disclosed to us more profoundly, so as to minister more effectually to our humility, watchfulness, and wisdom. But the failures of humanity in the new scene of trial in which it has been brought by the gospel, must be *studied*, or they will never minister in their proper measure to our warning and improvement.

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